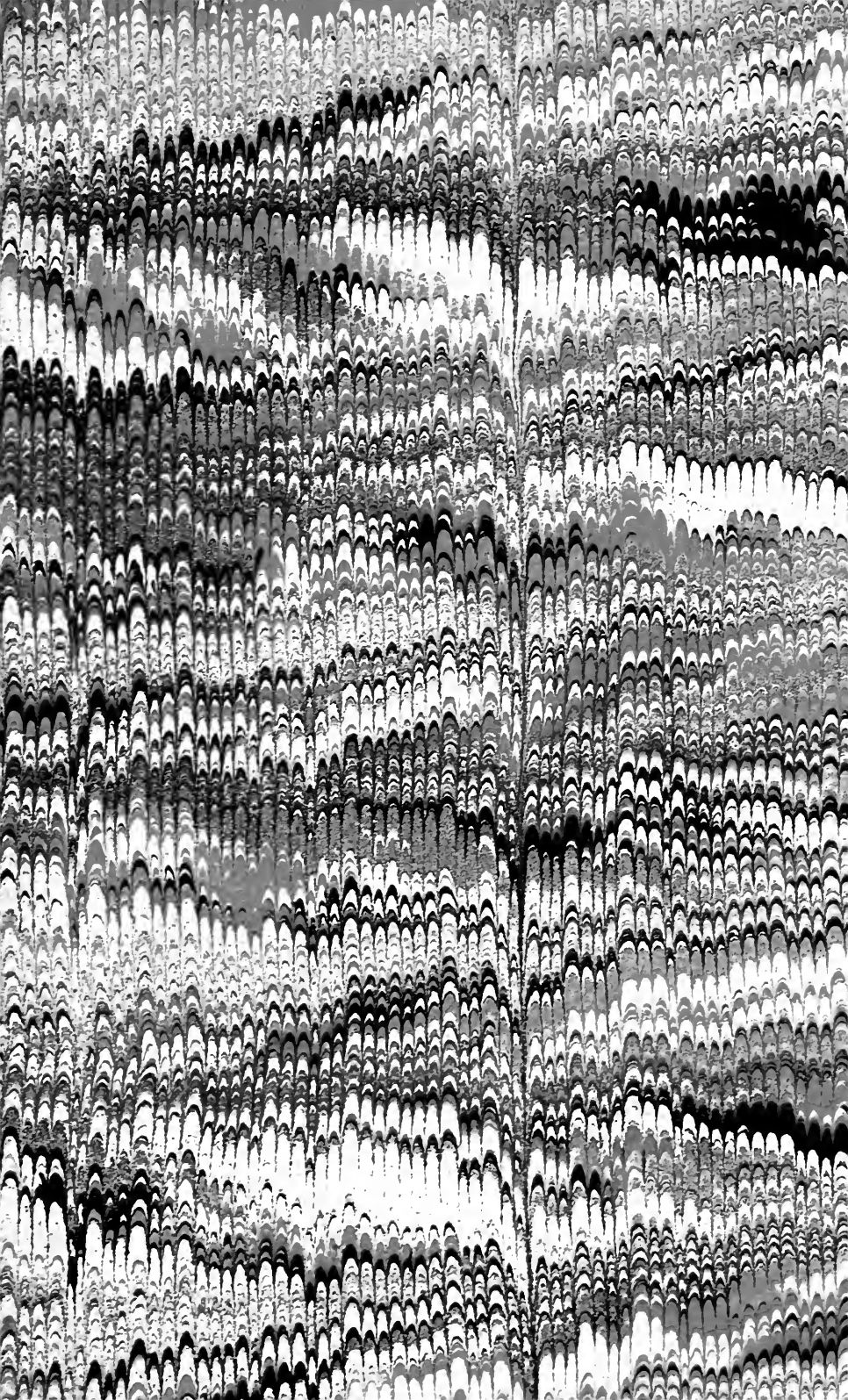


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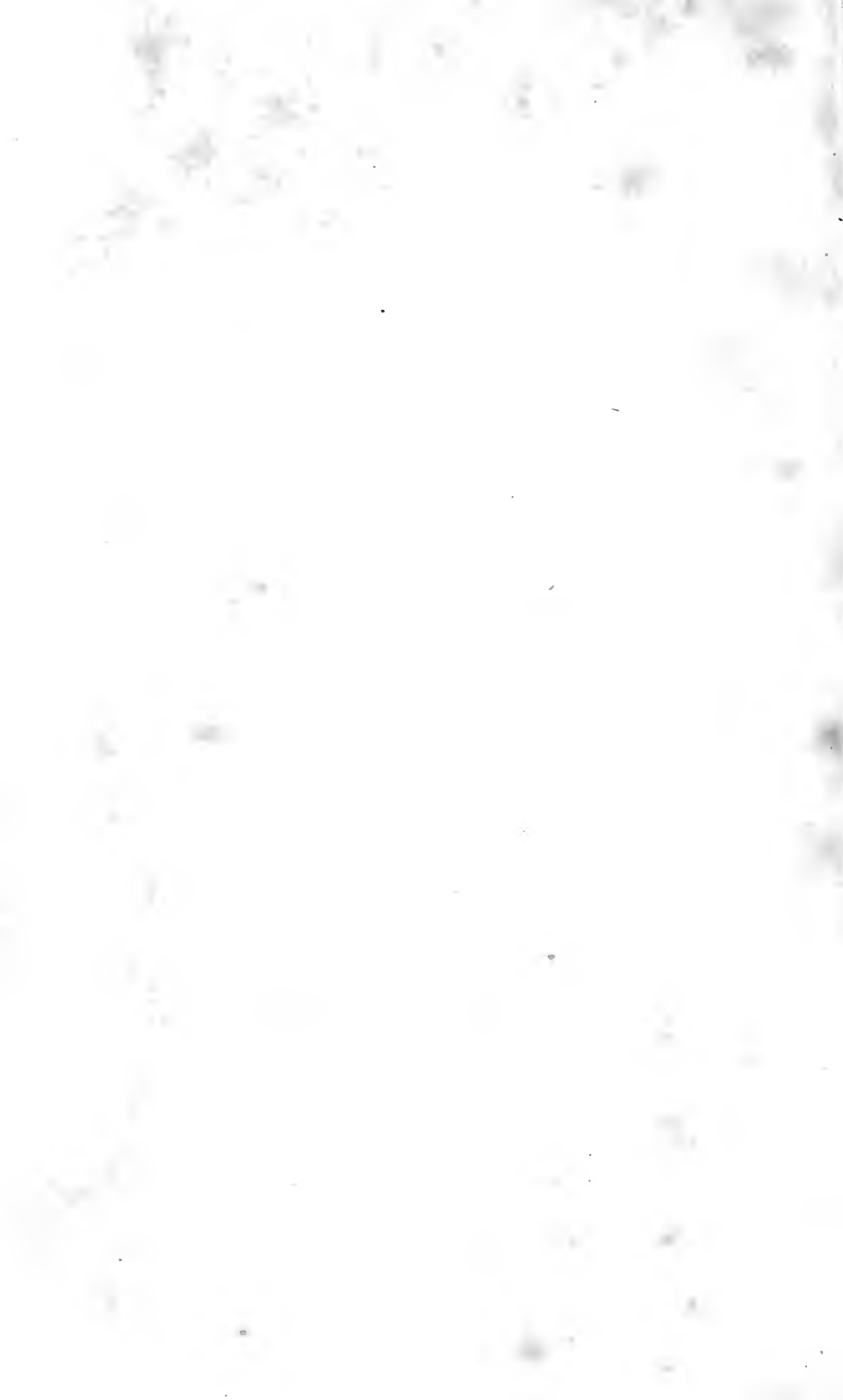
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OCTAVIA ELPHINSTONE,

A MANX STORY.

AND

LOIS, A DRAMA.

BY MISS ANNE TALLANT.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON

SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET.

1835.

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OCTAVIA ELPHINSTONE.

CHAPTER I.

THE PET.

I'll have a doll of porphyry, with diamonds in her curls ;
A rocking horse of ivory, a skipping rope of pearls ;
I'll have a painted paper kite, with banker's notes for wings,
A golden fiddle to play at night, with silver wire for strings.

OCTAVIA Elphinstone was a spoiled child, who was left in her infancy by her father, an officer in the army, to the care of Mrs. Manners, "the principal" of "an establishment for young ladies" at Twickenham. Octavia was

Ms. A. 9. 2. 52. 1. 1. 1.

at first the plaything, then the ornament, and always the favourite of the school. She was gifted with a lively, fearless disposition ; in her actual infancy she had been indulged in every changeful caprice. Seven sweet children had been consigned to early rest by Mrs. Elphinstone, from whom they inherited delicacy of constitution : hope, however, whispered that in this child, to whom she gave a name at once Roman and romantic, she should be rewarded for her previous trials ; but ere the leaves of intelligence had opened in her bud of promise, Mrs. Elphinstone was herself suddenly removed from the world. It was partly on that account, and partly because he knew that he should soon be bereft of her infant smiles, that Major Elphinstone weakly, but naturally, (is not all weakness nature ?) could not bear her to suffer the slightest contradiction. He quit-

ted England, and took especial care to impress on Mrs. Manners's mind, his anxiety that Octavia might not be thwarted in any thing "She will be left," said he, "alone, with scarcely a relation near her *at school*, with no advantage but *plenty*; therefore I must beg, that the only approach to happiness which is open to her may never be denied to her wishes." Mrs. Manners did not think the Major's argument sound, but the pupil came on terms too advantageous for her to venture to bandy words on the subject. Octavia did not clearly understand that her papa was going away *for good*; he told her he was going in a boat over the seas.

"Yes, on the lake," said she.

"No, my darling, a long way off."

"As far as heaven, where mamma is?" asked the child.

The father's feelings were subdued ; he kissed her tenderly, and in few and broken words recommended his only child to Mrs. Manners.

Octavia accompanied a teacher into the dressing-room to have her clothes unpacked ; it was soon crowded with curious little folks, eager to see the contents of the numerous trunks ; their treble voices were loud in praise of "lovely frocks," and "sweet hats," and "elegant shoes." The child had so long been used to elegant and costly clothes, that she cared little about them. During the ceremony of unpacking, she knelt down on the floor and amused herself with spinning one of the three sovereigns which papa had given her,—these were *new* to her,—a little girl came and wished to spin one of the two Octavia had laid aside ; the pet, however, did not choose to allow her ; she fixed her little arm upon them, and forcibly

held them covered. The scuffle called the attention of the teacher, who was of opinion that they must be given up to her care, "for fear Miss Elphinstone should put them into her mouth." These words suggested an idea which would, probably, never have entered the child's head;—quick as thought they were in her mouth, and choking, as much from passion as from the sovereigns, she sputtered out, "I am to do as I like—papa said so, and I always have done so, and I always will."

"Mercy on us," cried the teacher, "what a spirit, and she is only four years old! Do as you like, indeed! but I'll speak to Mrs. Manners:" and running down stairs, she did not in her extreme haste hear Octavia's light feet after her. Miss Page impatiently stated the case to Mrs. Manners, who smiled and said, "Well, well, we must not frighten the child:

her papa *did* say she was to do as she liked."

"*There !*" cried Octavia, forcing her way under Miss Page's arm. The lesson was not lost upon her, though she *was* only four years old. "What one has done one may do," is one of the tunes pricked on the barrel of every child's instinct.

Though Octavia began her school life with a disagreement, she showed little appearance of a quarrelsome disposition ; indeed, for what *could* she quarrel ? She had but to speak and to have, to ask and to receive. Her life ought to have been happy, if happiness consist in the fulfilment of wishes ; but *her* life showed that happiness flows rather from a suppression than from the unrestrained gratification of desires. When first she came to school, her opening penetration discerned that she was an object

of wonder to her playfellows; she perceived that they had not half the toys, nor ribbons, nor books that she had, and yet she had but to say, “ I should like a new doll,” and she had it. No wonder that pride was soon fixed in her young mind,—her favours were so cheaply earned and so lavishly bestowed, that it was natural for every one of her companions to yield to her caprices; and her smiles were so sunny, and her endearments so charming, that she soon found she could influence both teachers and governess. Here she learnt to despise,—yes,—at five years old she was proud, and was proud *to know* that she was proud; she had learnt to prevail with different persons by different means, and she despised both the persons and the means. She had, in fact, the consciousness which a great statesman hesitated not to acknowledge, (for the assertion

was acknowledgment) that “every one has a price.” With some she gained her point by violent passion, knowing, that even in her passions they said, “Did you ever see such a little creature, there is no refusing her:” and then the sweet caresses she bestowed on those who were honoured with her *love*, were so valued, that she found they sometimes obtained what tears and frowns, or even promises and gifts, failed to induce; therefore as a child she learnt to manœuvre, endeavouring to be all things to all persons. There is less distinction between the spring of a child’s actions and those of the perfect man, than is sometimes imagined: alas! that cunning should be so early a disease in the constitution of the mind! In mere infancy we learn *management*, and I fear that it is expelled, not so often by a love of candour and truth, as by fear of the

world's opinion and the estimation of the estimable; taking this, however, for a fact would add still more importance to the force of example, as strengthening the desire for esteem would increase the number of the estimable.

To return to Octavia Elphinstone. Her father, who had retired from the army and lived in the Isle of Man, occasionally came over and had her with him in lodgings in town, but the risk and delay of the voyage prevented his taking her to the island. On this subject alone Octavia was silent; it was the only refusal to her wishes. Her discernment quickly showed her that entreaties, poutings, promises, and blandishments would be in vain; papa seemed resolute, and the young lady had the wit to make a merit of submission, and by acquiescence to obtain certain indulgences which were becoming necessary to her ideas of hap-

piness. As she had in her childhood been allowed carte blanche for toys and trifles, so she now, on her entrance into her teens, desired to frequent the theatres, permission to subscribe to balls, concerts, and to a “circulating library.” (That word *circulating* has lately become synonymous with romance.)

At first Mrs. Manners urged that Miss Elphinstone was too young for an introduction to public places; but the Major rather abetted than checked his daughter’s wishes in this respect: he represented that he lived alone, and should, for that reason, take her from school earlier than girls usually were considered “finished,” and therefore it was advisable for Octavia to see a little of fashionable life before she finally quitted the roof of her governess. Mrs. Manners yielded—it was her duty to point out his daughter’s youth to Major Elphinstone,

and she did so ; but it was her pleasure to take her into company. She was indeed a girl to be proud of. Her size was of that happy medium which cannot be objected to as too tall or too low ; her figure, though slender, was softly rounded, and full of that attractive grace, which can only be expressed by the sweet word, *feminine* ; this delectable characteristic, too, pervaded her voice, carriage, and complexion, which last was the most lovely I ever beheld,—the least excitement (and Octavia was the creature of impulse) called up the rich glow imputed to southern females into cheeks so rarely delicate that I despair of giving an idea of their surpassing loveliness. I have always thought the cheek the most *distinguishing* feature in the human face ; some allege that the eye is, and others, again, the mouth ; but these must yield to such a cheek as I have seen, such as Octavia

Elphinstone's. Its exquisite yet distinct contour, in which every harshness of colouring and outline seemed melted into beauty, were to me the most decided stamp of *gentle birth*. No line disturbed its soft loveliness—no abrupt angles occurred in its clear outline—the full yet exquisite feature, half shrouded by the nut-brown hair which hung to her neck, presented the fairest type of perfection; it was so clear, so very clear! Octavia was beautiful always—beautiful when flushed with eagerness and youthful hopes—still more so in the rarer moments of calm repose. To me, her school companion, her person appeared perfect, for to this admirable complexion she joined dark eyes, with the largest pupils I ever remarked, and eyebrows delicately defined. Who, then, could be otherwise than proud of such a creature? and, as admiration is the first step to love, need

we wonder that her governess and companions loved her, flattered her, spoiled her ?

I have endeavoured to describe Miss Elphinstone's person—her abilities were good, but not largely drawn upon ; her own choice was the sole director of her studies, and unfortunately it seldom impelled her to application ; she acquired, nevertheless, by means of a ready wit and retentive memory, the reputation of being accomplished, and was probably more cordially admired than if she had possessed a greater fund of knowledge, for we have a dread of clever women, and a horror of clever girls. As it was, she was charming—but—she knew it.

I have said she could be all things to all persons. She *chose* to be loved, therefore she comported herself so as to ensure love. Her school-mates doated on her ; yet they called her proud, mischievous, vain, petulant,—and so she

was. It would not have fulfilled her ideas of ambition, if they had loved her *being perfect*,—she was vain of being loved, in spite of her faults. I have read that, with men, confidence carries rule over every person and thing, and I can believe it. Probably, in hardihood there is something so imposing, that we imagine it a sort of preface to admitted merit.

The rule of beauty and boldness in Octavia was indisputable ; for I *feel* that when I have determined to be affronted outright and downright with Octavia, when I was quite sure she was to blame, or when, if she had met me with apologies or explanations, I should have scouted her in the most decided manner ; yet when I saw no sign of repentance, but perhaps an additional buoyancy of spirits about her, I yielded to the sway she bore over all, and felt that though I knew her faults, I only saw her charms !

In her childhood she had had the bye-name of Elphine attached to her: it began by the French teacher's calling her so, and her fairy form was so worthy of the appellative, that it was retained as she grew up. She liked distinction, and the name pleased her fancy, or it is probable she would not have acknowledged it.

There is little matter for surprise in her being an acknowledged favourite. Beauty in itself is a passport to most hearts; but Elphine joined so many other advantages,—she was rich; she was independent; she could beg holidays, buy treats, influence tasks, take to plays and concerts, and, above all, was able and willing to assist in smuggling a novel. Moreover, she was the life of the school-room, the pride of her governess, the show-girl of the masters! Oh! how does that *show-off* injure the healthful simplicity of a girl's mind. Surely if parents could

know what deep foundations it lays for that most encroaching foible of their daughters—vanity,—they would not feel, or at least *show* such extravagant joy on seeing them the admired of a “Public Day.”

CHAPTER II.

THE PUBLIC DAY.

“ A look as blithe—a step as light,
As fabled nymph or fairy sprite,
A voice whose every word and tone,
Might make a thousand hearts its own,—
A brow of fervour, and a mien
Bright with the hopes of gay fifteen.

* * * * *

And oh ! that negligence of dress,
The wild infantine playfulness:
That archness of the trifling brow,—
That could command—we knew not how—
Were links of gold that held me then,
In links I may not know again,
For dearer to an honest heart,
Is childhood's mirth, than woman's art.”

PERHAPS no scene of triumph is so completely
satisfying to the female heart as a “ Public

Day " at a girl's school. The thousand direct or indirect assurances the show girl receives that *she* is the chosen one, before the momentous day arrives ;—the extra lessons, the additional ornaments, the careful decorating, the repeated injunctions, " not to disappoint the high expectations formed of her," " to remember all eyes will be on her," that " *she* will be looked to as the leader of the dance," or, it may be, the first character in the juvenile drama. Nothing could save a girl's head from being turned by such flattering pre-eminence, but a failure on the day, and when, instead of that, Elphine heard herself encored, applauded, and instanced as a pattern to their daughters, by parents ; saw the gratified smile of Mrs. Manners, as she said, in the hearing of the whole company, " Miss Elphinstone, you have fulfilled my most anxious wishes : I only regret your papa is not here to

witness your triumph, and partake my delight ; —let me thank you for the pleasure your exertions have afforded my friends, and the credit they have reflected on my establishment.” What head of fifteen could have borne it ? I query if any would have *appeared* to bear it so well as Elphine. She chose to play the simple, and though afterwards invited to join the dance of “grown children,” which took place at the conclusion of the juvenile exhibition, she preferred sitting still. She had the tact to know that *now* her dancing was considered perfect ; and she thought it was possible that by being more tired, or not having such practised partners, her credit might be in some degree injured.

Thus, in the school of life, many find it expedient to forego a slight gratification, rather than, by grasping at more, hazard the credit

they have already gained. But if Elphine's equanimity was endangered by the plaudits of the company, and shaken by Mrs. Manners's public address, it was utterly overthrown by the *talking over* of the affair among her young friends next day. Of course it was the only subject on the tapis, and a disinterested person, *i. e.* neither pupil, teacher, nor relative, might have been amused by the voluble conversations which different happy groups were carrying on in the garden. In one walk were two *friends*, Miss Parsons and Miss Clark, who were the standing butts of the school. It was customary to say of these inseparables, "Here is Mary Parsons, Anne Clark cannot be far off." They were sentimental, though their very appearance put to flight every sentiment in others save that of the striking dissimilarity of their noses—that of Mary Parsons remind-

ing us, of the long *tight* nasal organ of his Grace of ———, as we had seen him represented when, as a great treat, Mrs. Manners took us to see the panorama of Waterloo, whilst Anne Clark's brought before us that cocked-up, immovable, impossible-to-be-drawn-down nose of a by-gone minister to whom we had politely been introduced by Madame Tussaud, as she has him playing at one of his favourite games. But they would be sentimental, and were now playing off their first-rate airs.

“Dear Anne,” began Miss Parsons, “how excessively you exerted yourself last night ! you looked charmingly ; but I had my fears that you would injure your delicate health. I often gave you a cautionary shake of the head. Heigho ! we, who were heroines last evening, are to-day transformed into *courtiers* and *gardeners*. Do you understand my allusion, love ?”

“ Understand—yes ; but forgive me, dearest Mary—my thoughts are not here,” sighed she of the *nez retroussé*, in the softest zephyr. Just then Elphine and a group passed them, when she, overhearing Miss Clark’s dulcet breathings, sang “ My heart’s in the highlands, my heart is not here.” Her party laughed loudly, and, in the exuberance of youthful mirth, ran till they were stopped by an arbour which terminated the walk.

“ What did we run for?” asked Caroline Mavor.

“ To rest ourselves,” replied Elphine, throwing herself on a seat ; “ I am quite tired.”

“ Ah, Elphine, you did not look tired last night,” said Caroline, looking significantly.

“ Nor you, my dear. Well, I must do you the justice to say that in all our rehearsals you *never* danced as you did last night ; but I re-

marked it of all. I think it must have been the lights—and the band—and the”——

“The company, Elphine?”

“True, the company had a share. I am sure I never felt so elated, and even little Madge surpassed herself. Kiss me, Madge; you managed your pirouette admirably.”

“Oh! but my sandal—I was so ashamed!”

“Never mind the sandal; no one saw it but Mrs. Hirst Favell, and she has broken a sandal before now, I dare say.”

“Oh! but you, Elphine—I never shall forget your Zauberflöte; often as I’ve heard you play it, never did you touch the keys as you did last night.”

“Fancy, child, ’tis your fancy—I tell you the chandeliers dazzled your eyes and bewildered your brain. I should have disgraced the *best of masters*, if, to use one of his elegant technicalities, I had *broken down*.”

“How droll you are, Elphine! but did the light from the chandeliers dazzle the eyes of that young lord—what’s his name?”

“The gentleman with Mrs. Hirst Favell?” asked Octavia *simply*.”

“No, no, that was young Heneage. By the by, I heard his brother, that handsome officer, say Anne Clark was the finest girl—I’m sure he has no taste.”

“But she did look remarkably well;—nay, I thought her almost beautiful in the shawl dance. A little more animation would do no harm, however, to her graceful attitudes.”

“Oh!” said Caroline, “did you hear the Dean criticising Laura Flintham’s features? He said a vast deal in her favour, and concluded by declaring she was a classical beauty.”

“Ah! ah!” cried little Madge, who had stooped apparently inattentive, to gather some

early violets ; “ you all heard something, I dare say, and so did I, but I won’t tell—no, no, I won’t tell ;” looking archly at Miss Elphinstone.

“ Oh ! if it is about Elphine, you’ll tell me—and me”—cried a chorus of voices. “ I’ll tell her, then, her own self, because she tied my sandal for me last night. Who do you think asked your name ?—why that gentleman you would not dance with !”

“ And was that all ?—what a grand secret !” said they all in a breath.

“ No it was not all, you would all like to have it said of you ; but you cannot, Carry, for you’re too tall—nor Miss Hirst Favell, because—”

“ But what was it, Madge ?” asked Elphine impatiently.

“ Why—stoop down—he said—he said, you were a perfect little beauty ! There, I’ll run away lest they should beat me !” and off

she bounded, throwing down her violets as she started.

“The little creature!” said Caroline, “to remember so well.”

“And to *understand*,” remarked Miss Hirst Favell.

“I dare say it is all a mistake,” said Elphine in a constrained voice; “such a child is not likely to be correct.” But if Octavia really thought her capable of mistaking, it is probable she wished to have a correct statement; for it was observed that she chose to have Madge with her that evening, and as I passed where they were sitting, I heard the little girl say, “And he told his brother, if you would not dance, he should sit and look at you.”

“May I join you, Elphine?” said I.

“To be sure; Madge and I were talking over last night.”

“ Ah ! ’twill be well if some of us don’t dream of last night.”

“ And you, Joanna ?”

“ Oh ! I am quite heart whole. Indeed I had not a pleasant word spoken to me except by old Lady Barnet, who said something agreeable to every one : she thinks it a duty incumbent on her in return for our painting flowers for her, thereby giving an *éclat* to her hot-house it would not otherwise possess. Mrs. Manners would not get through a public day, if it were not for her ladyship : I saw her always on the alert to cheer any that seemed dull or ill-humoured ; but did you notice Miss Hirst Favell ? what a look she gave her brother for catching her shawl !”

“ Yes ; but, Joanna, I think we’ve talked over every body but Mrs. Manners ; now what thought you of her ?”

“ Why I thought she looked a lady and she moved a queen. When I’m an old woman I’ll always wear a train.”

“ And I’ll wear a black hat ;—I almost wish I was an old woman to sport one ! and I’ll have *such* a drooping white feather !”

“ Ah ! Elphine, you will do many things before you come to the black hat !—but hark ! there’s the supper bell.”

Mrs. Manners entered the room *à l’ordinaire* with a book in her hand : no one studied effect more than she did ; and to produce it she took care never to come into a room without something in her hand : at home it was in the morning a newspaper, in the afternoon a book, and each served for a subject of conversation. Mrs. Manners was quickly enclosed by her pupils, who thanked her for the amusement of the preceding evening ; indeed it seemed a regular

debtor and *creditor* settling. Mrs. Manners was a woman of finished air and appearance : she loved to flatter girls by treating them as women. With lively girls it was a plan that succeeded admirably ; but she had some too modest, or too shy, to meet it properly ; it was, however, this manner which had hitherto held a complete ascendancy over Miss Elphinstone. I never saw *through* this flattery so clearly as on this evening ; surely it was not because *I* was so little praised ! She had a word of grace for all ; those whom she could praise heartily were addressed boldly as *Miss Mavor*, *Miss Hirst Favell* ; but there were some few who required more delicate handling ;—to such she said, “ I was quite taken by surprise by you, my dear Agnes ; always sing second, it suits your voice, and *I* make it a rule to think well of one who can bear to hear a voice above

her own. I heard the Dean say, ‘ If that young lady sang first, she would only be in her place.’ And Madge—where’s Madge? Little curly head, I need not say how you pleased me. Oh! Miss Fane, give me credit for dressing you in green; I told you how it would become you, and Lady Barnet said it was quite *refreshing* to turn to you; besides, there was not another frock of the colour, and I like something distinguishing. But I do not see Miss Elphinstone;—ah! those eyes look a little changed since last night at this hour: I say nothing to *you*, Elphine: some of you, my dears, surprised me, Miss Elphinstone only equalled my expectations. O that her father had been here!”

Elphine was overcome, completely wearied; her spirits had been violently excited the previous evening; she had drunk deeply of the cup of admiration, and she had passed this day

thinking over the many agreeable words and more agreeable glances she had received :—this mention of her father was too much for her ; she leaned on my arm and burst into tears. Mrs. Manners pointed to her dressing-room which opened from the school-room. We went there, and Elphine was vexed at having so exposed herself. “ But indeed, Joanna, I am wearied, quite worn out. Mercy on you, child, how quietly you take all this !”

“ All what, Elphine ?”

“ Why, these praises, and thanks, and acknowledgments.”

“ Nay, pardon me ; I was only told I looked well in green, or green looked well on me.” Her light spirit returned at my words, and she laughed heartily at my mock meekness, as she called it.

“ Surely we shall have letters from Douglas,

to morrow, Joan.—Heigho! good night: do pray stay and bid Mrs. Manners good night for me, say I was so tired ;—heigho !”

“ Is that sigh to stay in England, Elphine ?”

“ No, it is already on its way to the island —the sweet little island.”

CHAPTER III.

THE RESULT.

“Sensibility would be a good portress if she had but one hand ; with her right she opens the door to pleasure, with her left to pain.”

THE next was Octavia's last half-year. She resolved to give her young companions a farewell fête, and as we were not permitted to visit during the last month, on account of finishing work, keeping frocks clean, &c. she determined on delaying her dance till that month. Mrs. Mannors was a little annoyed by this arrange-

ment, but Elphine was a privileged person, and therefore very little opposition was made to her in a direct manner. It chanced, however, that there was a family whom Octavia wished to invite, from whom Mrs. Manners had received some slight; and Elphine was told, in terms the least offensive, and in Mrs. Manners's sweetest manner, and with her most expiatory smile, "that it was *impossible* Miss Leighs could enter her house." Octavia at first acted the stupid; but not finding it succeed, "Oh! my dear ma'am, Miss Hirst Favell met Jane Leigh the last time she was at home, and they talked it all over. Jane inquired, and Miss Hirst Favell explained how you were visiting at Lady Barnet's when the Leighs gave their concert, and Jane Leigh said it was all a mistake. You know, ma'am, Mrs. Leigh is very deaf, and——"

“ My dear Elphine, you must excuse me ; any thing else you can ask.”

“ But, ma’am, Mrs. Leigh will call and explain; pray, *dear* Mrs. Manners! I assure you they do not make the least objection to come. Now pray, pray look ! I’ve written the card. — ‘ The Misses Leigh and Mr. G. C. Leigh.’ Oh ! ’tis the prettiest name to write I have met with yet.”

Mrs. Manners tried all ways.—“ Is that a carriage at the door, love ? Ah ! I see, for our opposite neighbours ;—I always say we and the Foxes have more carriage company than any one in this street. Well, my dear, may I ring for James ? Are your cards ready ?”

Octavia understood her, but she dissembled. She contrived to have it intimated to the Leighs how she was situated. They were equally anxious with herself that they should

come; and, by way of making sure, Mrs. and Miss Jane Leigh called on Mrs. Manners; in vain. Mrs. Manners was inflexible, and Octavia outrageous. Opposition from this quarter was so new, that she did not attempt to brook it. She made and remade a hundred resolutions; sometimes threatening to have no ball, then other thoughts would prevail. I had some influence over her, and exerted it for my schoolfellows. “Remember, Elphine, it is your last half-year: leave the school you have so long been at, in the credit you have so long maintained.”

“Yes, Joanna, it *is* my last half-year. I feel that; if it were not so, I should not be refused.”

“Nay, Elphine——”

“Nay, my dear, it speaks for itself; there will be a way, but you may set your heart at

rest ; the ball we will have, though I no longer anticipate pleasure from it."

And, truly, little pleasure did it give any one. We had the best of every thing but hearts to enjoy ; and I really believe Octavia had a mischievous delight as she stood looking at the gloomy faces which surrounded the well-covered supper table.

" Who would have thought," whispered Caroline Mavor, " that *one* person could have thrown every thing so *wrong* ? What a party of pleasure ! and this the last party of pleasure we shall have this half-year."

" Do not be too sure of that," said Elphine, coming behind us.

It seemed to be with one consent that this evening was never talked over, at least not openly. Perhaps it was the subject of the many corner conversations which about this time were taking place.

Sometimes I heard stray words as I passed the clustered heads, in close converse ; but my leaving school depended on the finishing of a certain drawing, at which I laboured every spare hour, so that I seldom joined the divided sets ;—an instinctive feeling, however, told me discontent had crept into our once happy school-room. I often wondered Mrs. Manners never remarked it, but, probably, she chose to be blind. Miss Elphinstone and I slept in the same room ; and her actions were so much more lively than mine, that she usually was undressed first. One night, however, she was far behind me ; she appeared to have made up her mind to be last, and I did not care to thwart her. For a full hour I watched her drawing her pretty hair through her fingers ; first it was twisted over her eyes, then braided across her forehead : then she took a freak to put

ornaments into it. “Dear Elphine, when do you mean to curl that hair?”

“Oh! you are awake,—I was just wishing for your opinion. Tell me, does this pearl band or my dress comb look best?”

“Best?—oh! the comb;—but pray be quick and come to bed, for the candle tires my eyes sadly.”

“Shut them, then, my dear, for this candle will not be extinguished these—let me see—it is only eleven—not these two hours.”

“Gracious, Octavia! Miss Elphinstone, what are you about? what can you be going to do?” I exclaimed, as she calmly took out a satin slip.

“Going to do?—why to get you to tie my frock, and go with me, if you will—you are one of the included. There,” tossing me a card, “there’s a card written by George Leigh himself.”

“ Oh ! Octavia, you know we are under promise not to go out the last month ;—and at this hour too ! ”

“ The hour absolves us, my dear ; ’tis not tea. Read your note, child. you’ll see it is an invitation to breakfast.”

“ Impossible, Elphine ! ”

“ Not at all impossible, Joan. Come, jump up and dress ; the housemaid is won over to the cause, and at one we are off.”

“ Think, think, Elphine, what you are doing ;—the risk, the dreadful hazard.”

“ Pshaw ! is it not my last half-year ? if we *are* found out, which I do not in the least fear. Come, Joanna, I never dared tell you beforehand ;—I trusted to a *coup-de-main* ; I meant to have wakened you when I was full dressed, and then to have startled you into it.”

“ Who are going, Elphine ? ”

“ Will *you* go, Joanna ? ”

“ No.”

“ Then you must excuse my telling you. If you go, you will see the party ; if you stay away, it will be best for you to know nothing about it.”

“ But I know *you* are going.”

“ As to that, you are welcome to all you know about me ; but I’ll betray nobody else. Come, my dear, we have no time to lose ; what will you put on ?—green ?—you know *that* becomes *you*. Nay, Joanna, do not look so grave, that does *not* suit you. Now do not screw up your mouth for *no* ; you should never put your lips in that form, except when you are going to sing. I remember that was my first lesson—‘ Always form your lips as if you were going to pronounce *O*,’ said Mr. Eavestaff. But now, dear Joanna, rise ; my pleasure will

not be half complete unless you are in the scrape ; remember 'tis the last favour I may ask while I stay at school. Do dress yourself and go, there's a dear good girl."

"Now do stay at home, Octavia, and you will be much more like one ; reflect, dear Elphine, only reflect, and I am sure you will stay. You are at present likely to leave school in the highest credit, do not by a foolish freak hazard the character you have so long borne."

"Well done, Prudence ! ' character you have long borne,' forsooth ! why what sort of character did you please to bestow on me the very last time we differed ? Was not I mischievous, petulant, and I know not what beside ? Oh ! your pardon, young lady, I know you are an admirer of consistency, and I am only acting up to my character ; besides, I am in for it ; I am ringleader, and could not

desert my party for any thing, no, not for those tears, Joanna. Nay, now you are downright foolish! how I shall crumple my frock!" she continued, as she threw herself on the bed beside me.

For some moments she lay perfectly still. At last I saw she was weeping. "Dearest Elphine, you will not go?"

"I must, I must," cried she, springing up, "it is no use saying another word, Joanna. I promised Jane Leigh I would, because of the shabby way in which I was treated about them at my ball: and there are others leagued—in short, I must."

"But you would rather not?"

"I'm not sure of that. I rather think I shall like it, but I'll tell you better when I come back. I want to engage Jane Leigh to visit me when I leave school, and I have a book of

hers, and many little matters have to be arranged. We put off all till this evening—morning I should say. Hark! hush! fare you well, Joan; I shall give your compliments to George Leigh, and ‘you are engaged.’ ”

She extinguished her candle and went down stairs softly. I every moment expected they would be surprised or betrayed; but they not only set out in safety, but returned the same. It was broad daylight when Elphine entered our room. I expected her to speak on coming in; she, however, scarcely gave a glance to see if I were awake. Quietly and deliberately she undressed, put away all her frippery, and sat down before the glass to curl her hair. Never was it done so exactly;—every curl was done and undone half-a-dozen times, I all the while affecting to sleep, which, in fact, my thoughts would not allow me to do in the course of that

night. Sometimes she ceased curling and let her hands fall languidly by her side ; then she would rouse herself and brush her poor head with great perseverance. It was evident she was greatly fatigued ; for, at length, with her arms folded on the toilette, and her head resting on her arms, she fell asleep. Poor girl ! how often afterwards did I think of that morning ! Sometimes I ventured to remind her of it. Occasionally its image checked her in her idle, reckless pursuits ; but frequently its mention rendered her more positive and headstrong.

Many languid faces assembled round the breakfast table ; it was easy for me, who had a key to the affair, to see *who* had been of the nocturnal party. Poor Elphine looked cut to the heart when Mrs. Manners with great solicitude asked her if she had rested ill. It is im-

possible to stifle, I may say to choke, the feelings of shame to which such a scene gives rise. There she sat, knowing, feeling, (but not seeing,) that many knew nothing of her dereliction; those who did, were equally implicated, except indeed one, who, however, she was sure would not betray her, but the rising, gushing sensations were, as she afterwards confessed, insupportable. “To *act* a lie! to be seen and known to do so! Oh! Joan,” said she, when we were alone, “nothing but bringing the others into disgrace kept me from owning every thing—did you see me half rise? the words were on my lips. I was quite faint when Mrs. Manners asked if I had passed a bad night; my head was in a whirl; once I thought I *had* actually said, ‘Ma’am, we were out all night;’ really, Joanna, I did. Do you know how I felt? Do you remember ever feeling so?

But 'tis no matter, the evening is now over, and miserable enough it was."

"Miserable, Octavia?"

"Aye, truly, I envied you a thousand times when I heard the remarks made on your refusing to go. Can you believe it? after their so pressing us to go, Amelia Leigh said, 'We were just going to bed, having given you up.' George, too, reflected on us by praising you for being so *exquisitely feminine*, he liked women to be fearful: pshaw! he's an exquisite and nothing better. Still Joanna, there was one there who was something better, the same young Heneage who was at our ball, our *happy* ball—but I do not think I liked him. I am sure I had no reason, for he never was civil. He had the audacity to say I did not look half so well as on the public night, and kept pestering me with questions about which

was Miss Fane—was she the sleepy beauty his brother admired?—no, she was present he saw—was it the foreign looking girl in black gossamer? (only think of his knowing gossamer from calimanco!) at last I said you were in green, and finding that did not satisfy the gentleman, I told him Miss Fane was the perfect little beauty he had said he would look at all night! I own it was very thoughtless of me, my dear, and bold if you like, but he wearied me with his inquiries about you. Well, would you think it? he was utterly abashed; you never saw any one look so silly, —ten times worse than George Leigh does always, for George is unconscious of it, but Mr. Heneage felt he was looking silly, and so I suppose, he thought he would punish me, for he took himself away and spent all the rest of the time with the sleepy beauty, Anne Clark. To

crown all, when I asked Mrs. Leigh for Jane to go home with me, she said,—no, she did not exactly *say*, but she hinted that I was too young, and, no doubt, she meant too giddy for Jane to be with. The worst of it was, that Mrs. Leigh being so deaf, I could not make her understand without Mr. Heneage hearing ;—there he sat twirling the bell-rope and listening to every word ; at last, however, the handle gave him a sharp blow on the face, and right glad was I to see myself in some sort avenged. It was a miserable night, a wretched party ! to be sure, Mr. Heneage would come home with me, but it was quite evident he merely saw me *safe* at school again. We scarcely spoke till we passed the church ; the clock happened to be striking five, which he in his wisdom remarked—I could not help laughing, but indeed, Joanna, it was an hysteri-

cal laugh, and one that made him look so grave as to change my foolish mirth into still more foolish tears, which I believe he saw ; for when we parted at the turn he had the assurance to say, “ *This* will do you good for the rest of your life.” But what do I care for the future, unless I could recall the past ! Oh ! if I had but stayed at home ! And now it is all over, they are every one ready to say it was my fault, and so, in truth, it was, I do not deny that ; yet they were equally eager about the party when it was in anticipation. I did not tell them, Joanna, how nearly it was given up at the last, but you know, *you* whom I love so dearly, and that’s enough.”

The eventual discovery and just displeasure of Mrs. Manners seemed a relief rather than a concern to Octavia, who generously took upon herself a larger share of blame than I believed was due to her.

CHAPTER IV.

TEMPER.

“ Plus nous étions jeunes, moins nous avions de résignation . car dans la jeunesse surtout l'on s'attend au bonheur l'on croit en avoir le droit, et l'on se révolte à l'idée de ne pas l'obtenir.”

OCTAVIA never recovered the disgust this affair caused her ; she saw plainly that it was her advantages, her power, her facilities, in short, as she said, her *purse*, which drew the attentions of her companions, not *herself*. Sometimes she affected to despise them and their love, declaring there was nothing real in friend-

ship. She recurred to the instances of her earlier youth, and adduced them as reasons for her cynical opinions, vowed she cared not for any one's affection, that she should never lack assurances of it so long as she had the means of paying back in the only coin her flatterers valued, and protested her certainty that all the friendship offered her was nothing more than interested flattery ; and, sooth to say, her power had been so unfortunately great, that she had never had the opportunity of proving it otherwise.

From these tirades, arising from a dissatisfaction with herself, she would cease exhausted and spiritless. Caroline Mavor used to say, it would have made a good picture, if she could have hit me off sitting quietly working at my beautiful *Psyche*, which at every view seemed to require more touching and finishing, and

Octavia with her small fingers plunged in her thick hair, as with an elbow on the table she leaned in vacant restlessness, sometimes throwing back her redundant tresses with an action which seemed to say she would fain fling away her cares with equal impetuosity.

“What a contrast between you and me, Joanna !” said Elphine, one evening when we were seated near each other ; “here am I with every possible wish gratified, and often anticipated, having only to hint and to have, and yet I am miserable—utterly miserable,—and you so quiet, so satisfied, though I know your whole heart is set upon getting that foolish drawing finished.”

“Not my whole heart, Octavia, for I wish sincerely to see you happier. What can make you so discontented ? I suspect, for the first time in your life, you *have* formed a wish that *cannot* be gratified ; still I think if you had

some drawing, or some anything, or any something which you *must* do, you would be more like other people."

"More like other people! can you wish that, Miss Fane? If you advocate the cause of such time-servers, I shall only have to class you with them, and feel that I am indeed alone."

"Never less alone, than when alone, Elphine, believe me. Let me beg of you, if only to please me,—come you know I am no time-server,—indulge me, therefore, by throwing off these morbid humours. Do not think so ill of your companions; every one must be guided by circumstances; you should remember, that they of whose coldness you complain are returning to school; they, therefore, naturally, feel it impossible to fling off those restraints both of manners and feelings, which you without the least effort can dispense with. Why

should they disgust Mrs. Manners and the teachers by showing a useless and (as would soon appear) refractory demeanour? It would only gratify your vanity, Octavia, and that," I continued, "would be needless."

She had listened with great patience, and even honoured me by raising her head into a position of attention.

"I believe," said she, "it may be needless to increase my vanity, but what else have I to turn to? I have no relation but papa, and here has he left me all my life isolated."

"Nay, Elphine, 'tis he who is isolated, as he no doubt fondly hopes for your benefit."

"Well, Joanna, you are very contradictory this evening: I wished to prove that I was very unhappy, with good cause, and in the commencement you make me smile, and now being interrupted, I shall beg to ask why I

am always obliged to give up to you? I dare say, if you had not stopped my harangue, I should have brought that in as a minor clause of grief, but I insist that you clear up this matter to my satisfaction before further proceedings."

"Ah, Elphine! I hope your stock of complaints, like most other 'miseries of human life,' diminishes when looked into. Without flattery, your countenance at this moment is any thing rather than the frontispiece of affliction; but come, any thing to rouse you,—if you will grind my colours I will enter on my defence."

"Oh! here is Madge returned, she shall be witness, Joanna. Come hither, Madge; how is mamma? what beautiful roses! whom are they for?"

"You shall choose;—some for you, one for

Miss Fane, and one for Caroline, and"—continued the child hesitating—"I wished to give Laura Flintham one—the gigantic velvet; she wanted one for the screen she is painting. But never mind, Octavia, you may have it, for I can send to mamma to-morrow."

"Not on my account, my dear child."

"Yes, indeed, it will be better, for this would die and be useless, and I will send for one in a pot;—now do, Elphine, keep it—stay, let me put them in your hair."

Madge climbed up and began to stick the roses in Miss Elphinstone's head, in a fantastic but not inelegant style. Octavia's spirits rose. She forgot my colours and my defence; again she basked in the warmth of notice, and she could not withstand its effect, though from so mere a child; she could not resist the inclination to keep the flowers, because it proved

Madge's greater affection for her. It was not till after some time that she remembered me, when I was brought to her mind accidentally by Madge, who was giving her an account of some visitors who had gone to see her mamma's hot-house.

“There was one gentleman who asked after you, Elphine, and you too, Miss Fane,” said she as she observed me look up, which I did, in fact, just in time to witness the richest glow over Elphine's complexion; “papa laughed at him for having two flames. What did he mean, Elphine?”

Elphine vouchsafed no reply.

“And he said he had a great *respect* for Miss Fane, and then papa laughed still more. Oh! sit still, Octavia, you have made me break this beautiful rose, and it is the one Mr. Heneage said was so curious—the shell-rose.”

“Let me look,” said Elphine, eagerly, “I never saw one.”

“There are many I admire more,” said Madge, “but you see it is shaped like a shell.”

It would seem as if Elphine admired it more than any other, for she wore it throughout the next day, and a few days afterwards I saw it was carefully stored among her best, her poor mamma’s trinkets.

Midsummer came at last. Octavia was devoted to music; it was almost the only art in which she had made any decided progress, and her acquirement of it was, perhaps, involuntary, for she was naturally musical; all her motions were, if I may so say, harmonious.

Caroline Mavor used sometimes to amuse herself and a party of us by watching Octavia’s motions, to each of which Caroline protested

she could accommodate some time ; indeed the whim pleased us so much that many airs were better known as Elphine's Quick Step, or Elphine's Chasse, than by their original names. Whenever I could creep quietly to the side of Caroline without a set about us, I enjoyed this amusement highly. Miss Mavor played admirably, and her easy transitions from "grave to gay," from mirth to melancholy, pleased me nearly as much as watching Octavia's truly feminine movements. But we were generally too soon interrupted ; some one discovered what we were engaged in, and at last, on its reaching Elphine's ears, adieu to all nature for that time.

Breaking-up day ! What sounds are comparable to those words ! Are any so musical—so magical ? I question if it were brought to the vote, whether "breaking-up day" would not bear an advantage over "chairing day,"

which is, I believe, the next subject of *general* interest. We all have felt the delight of breaking-up and going away,—there are many who have known nothing of the hopes and fears of a contested election.

Octavia received the prize for music; my Psyche carried off that for drawing. Elphine took hers very carelessly, and I felt afraid when I saw her manner. I dreaded lest she should decline the medal, as I know that to the misrepresentations of the music master she attributed Mrs. Manners's disgust on the subject of Mrs. Leigh's concert, and from the indignant curl of her lip, amounting to a smile of derision, I almost expected to see her return it. Whether she ever meditated any such thing I know not, but the medal was left in a drawer, after her departure. To be sure there were some trifling ornaments left also, and Mrs Manners

chose to infer that it was an act of forgetfulness ; but I had my suspicions to the contrary. With me and little Madge Octavia's parting was very tender ; from the others she separated almost with indifference, though to all she gave some token of her acquaintanceship. Madge surprised us by positively declining any gift but Elphine's old garden shawl.

“ I shall never part from *it*,” said the child, “ but if you gave me any thing valuable, I might.”

“ Write to me, my dear Elphine,” said I, “ as soon as you reach Douglas.”

“ I will, I will,” replied she, sobbing, “ and you, Joanna, pray write directly when Jane is married.”

We parted ; she to meet her papa in London, and from thence to go to the island on which she professed all her hopes of happiness were fixed,

and I to a scene of mixed joy and pain, of mingled smiles and tears—my sister's wedding!

How or where I obtained a quietus to the thoughts that thronged my mind, during the last few weeks I was at school, I cannot describe. Many times have I been obliged to chain down my mind to my employments, when it would fain have fled to “fancy's rich domain,” and revelled in the thousand and one ideas which crowd the brain, and flush the heart of a sister's bridesmaid elect. On finishing my drawing depended the event of accompanying Jane and her husband,—my efforts were great, and my wishes fulfilled. I went with her to witness and, by so doing, to partake of her happiness. I spent some months with her and Captain Earle in Bristol, and while there supported a constant correspondence with Octavia Elphinstone. I had many pressing invitations

to visit her in her sea-girt abode ; but my long absence from home, and my mother's falling into a bad state of health on my return, eventually caused years to elapse before we met.

CHAPTER V.

FORT ANNE.

“ Oh Absence ! skilled to lend to those we love
A fairy charm which bids us love the more,
Errors to soften, and defects remove
No less is thine, and mellowing light to pour
On those dark shades which most displeased before.”

AT length, however, my mother threw off the invalid, and, eager to give me a little relaxation, herself urged me to accede to Miss Elphinstone's desire that I should go to Douglas. Major Elphinstone met me at Liverpool to escort me to the island, of which I had heard so much in

Octavia's letters—the Isle of Man—the Isle of Knaves, as the Major called it.

It was on a delightful evening, early in August, that we entered the beautiful Bay of Douglas. I have heard much of the Bay of Naples, and the Bay of Dublin, but I question whether, if ever I should be carried thither, I should feel such emotions as swelled my bosom as we sailed into Douglas Bay.

“ Which is Fort Anne ? ” I asked, eagerly.

“ That, that is it, and surely there is Elphine ! ”

We passed under a terrace to the left of the town where stood a beautifully fair girl, so fair and fairy-like, that had I not known such a one at school, I should indeed have believed I was in a land of elves, and she their lovely princess. There is a feeling of great power impressed on the mind when entering another country ; you

feel regret, anxiety and sorrow when you quit your native shore; but all those are what you have known before;—the sensations experienced on landing in another island are altogether new. The consciousness that waters roll between you and home is perhaps the first thought to which your novel situation gives birth,—this is soon succeeded by emotions which none can know but those who have set foot on a foreign shore, and which, I doubt not, are acknowledged by most who have.

I had scarcely time to give my thoughts a name, before I was placed in a boat, which seemed to own Major Elphinstone's command, and in a few short minutes we scudded across the Bay. We landed on the terrace, where stood my dear Octavia, or rather it was Elphine in *propria personâ*. I despair of giving

any idea of her peculiar appearance, as she stood in her bright eagerness to welcome me;—such a total abandonment of precision in her dress, hair, and appearance,—her whole heart absorbed in me, and that heart most legible in her charming face. Then her fairy form so graceful, as she stood in strong relief upon the terrace, which is such an ornament to Fort Anne, formed a picture, that often comes before me, and never without a sigh of attesting interest.

Dearly was I welcomed and cherished by Octavia, who, for several days after my arrival, seemed every thing that could be expected or desired. She appeared not only gratified but happy, if, by any sacrifice of her own inclinations, she could add to my pleasure; and means were not wanting to content me: in-

deed, the house itself was a source of amusement and interest to me. It stands in a most prominent situation on Douglas Head, to the left as you enter the Bay. The sea washing the terrace, surrounding two sides of the house, mingled most soothing sounds with Elphine's Eolian harp, which was placed in a little octagon room. That favourite room! never can I forget the delightful hours spent there! It was Elphine's peculiar retreat—I can scarcely call it a boudoir, it was not so puerile—all had access to it. There were none of the overpowering perfumes, nor yet the spirit-stirring mystery usually attendant on a lady's boudoir. But having obliged you to enter the house, as I did, on the terrace, I will now take you in at the more usual entrance. Imagine, then, a long light conservatory, full of sweet flowers, and inter-

spersed with singing-birds. I shall lead you into a rather dark gallery, the gloom of which I well remember used to be most agreeably refreshing after being in the light conservatory. Here were several family pictures,—the Major in his regimentals, looking like Sir Joshua Reynolds's Lord Heathfield, Elphine's mother, a tall, ethereal creature, leaning against a sun-dial, and stretching out her hand towards the figure of her husband, as if to claim his guardianship, and her deliverance from the Time she felt devouring her. Over these portraits hung one of Elphine—Elphine in her happiest dress. She was represented as Ariel, though it was a bold stretch in the painter, and a most decided piece of flattery, I do not blame him ; for portraits in formal every-day or high-day dresses are odious. The author of an *Essay on Poetry and Music* gives the same opinion at

full length in much better terms. “ I have heard it disputed whether a portrait ought to be habited according to the fashion of the times, or in one of those dresses which, on account of their elegance or having been long in use, are affected by great painters, and therefore called picturesque. * * * If you wish to have a portrait of your friend, that shall always be elegant and never awkward, choose a picturesque dress; but if you mean to preserve the remembrance of a particular suit of clothes, without minding the ridiculous figure your friend will probably cut in it a hundred years hence, you may array his picture according to the fashion. The history of dresses may, however, be worth preserving.” A mere formal figure, however, was not Elphine; as Ariel she hovered over her parents, and I could not help thinking, as I saw her “ delicate ” figure bending towards her

father's picture, that the parted lips spoke, that the breath was perceptible, and her words, "Thy thoughts I cleave to—what's thy pleasure?"

CHAPTER VI.

CONISTERRE.

“ Toys of desperation !

SHAKESPEARE.

“ Deeds, thoughts, and words, perhaps remembered not
So keenly till that hour, but ne’er forgot ;
Things light or lovely in their acted time,
But now, to stern reflection, each a crime.
The withering sense of evil unreveal’d,
Not cankering less because the more conceal’d—
All, in a word, from which all eyes must start,
That opening sepulchre, the naked heart,
Bares with its buried woes till pride awake
To snatch the mirror from the soul—and break !”

I HAVE said that Fort Anne stretched over
the sea, and I can hardly imagine a more inter-

esting diorama than that we every day witnessed from the terrace. Immediately beneath us lay a wide expanse of sea—real green salt sea.

“Here, Joanna,” would Elphine say to me, “come hither, and let me introduce you to my show-room, let me point out to you every thing worthy of note. As dear papa would say, first look at this clear basin of salt water—as I should say, cast your eyes into this magnificent mirror, which is lovely in its calm humours, and sublime in all. Then look at the town of Douglas, reposing on the shore like a child relying on the protection of its parent, and see dear little Conisterre—there—I mean that little speck of an island, which, to your unpractised eyes, appears merely a knot of rocks; but to me, who know it when the tide is out, it seems—stay, what shall I compare it to? to a finished coquette, who just deigns to glance at her mirror,

the sea, and finding herself interesting in all views, allows it to come nearer and nearer, and to clothe her in a beautiful robe much finer and far more delicate than the most bride-like gauze. See how the light foam leaps and plays on those jagged and irregular rocks, as if it delighted to frolic around them,—if I had my papa's telescope"—she flew to the octagon, and returning continued,—“ yes, now I can see distinctly ; fix your eye, Joanna, on the highest point of Conisterre,—well, what do you see ? ”

“ Nothing but a mass of rocks, gradually lessening and lessening, till now I can see only the very topmost point.”

“ Ah ! you are a sad dullard ; the dancing foam has blinded your eyes : but I'll tell you what I fancy I always see, and what *was* once seen there. Let us go first, however, into the Octagon ; 'tis no ghost story I have for your ear,

though I believe my papa would rather have endured one than the sight he declares he once witnessed from this terrace.

“ I cannot vouch for the truth of the story, for on that evening I was particularly engaged. You have seen something of Conisterre ; but the tide was rising even when first you looked at it, therefore you must take my assurance that at low water Conisterre is a very tempting sort of fortress, just the sort of place for a young lady to choose to adventure ;—not sufficiently distant to alarm her, but yet quite inaccessible enough to render access a tolerable achievement. Well, about three years ago a girl was walking on the sands, and saw that the water was unusually low. ‘ Ah ! ’ thought she, ‘ my wishes are at last granted ; behold Conisterre lying as if patiently expecting my approach. I’ll go ;—I am determined to have a trophy

from those rocks this very night.' On she flew; the sands were at first firm, and, oh ! so cool, refreshing, and inviting !—and the islet looked so calmly sublime and grand. ' 'Twill be a fine thing to stand on that pinnacle,' thought she, ' and spout Byron's lines on solitude.' The sand was now becoming rather damp—dampish she called it ; 'twas but a step more and she would be on the rocks ;—three bounds more, and she was there ! Yes, there, Joanna, where I this moment pointed ! She stood with a sort of mixed pleasure viewing herself the sole occupant of the dreary isle. To be sure it was but a glance from the shore ;—she could see people promenading on the sands,—she could see, aye, I dare say she looked at Fort Anne, and thought what a fine object it was in the distance !

“ I understand she climbed to the top ; and

when there what do you think she saw? No new weed to add to her collection, not even a shell to reward her unparalleled attempt. I am well assured she thought not of spoil or trophies; for soon the feeling possessed her mind that the tide was fast flowing in. Down she bounded;—'twas too late,—Conisterre was again floating in the sea; in her fright she thought it floated *on* the sea. She surely moved; the tide could not be so rapid—so unusually, so unnaturally rapid. It was with great effort that she checked her screams and tears: but, I am informed, she did check both, and had the courage to try the water; but being presently taken off her feet, she was thankful to be thrown back on the rocks.* There she gradually recovered possession of

* Since the date of this story a very appropriate "Tower of Refuge" has been built upon this islet.

her mind--she forced it to be calm. She said to herself, 'There are numbers of people on the sands; they will see me, and surely they will put off for me. Then boats must pass, and the men must perceive me, therefore I may be calm.' Thus comforting herself she gradually ascended the naked, barren cluster of rocks, till, at last, she found herself obliged to mount the *one* last. How looked Fort Anne *then*, think you? On the terrace stood dear papa with his telescope, the very telescope you had at your eye this moment, Joan."

"And you, Elphine, where were you?"

"I, my dear? Oh! I was on Conisterre!"

"Good Heavens! You? How did you escape?"

"Listen. I stood there, trembling, shivering, fearing. Yes, my dear, fear would creep in as I saw myself driven to the last retreat

Another round of seconds, and I should be forced to the pinnacle. What I felt I cannot tell you,—’tis impossible. And then to think I was there through a wayward, wilful freak ; for no good purpose, but to gratify a senseless whim. There was I to be washed away in the sight of hundreds of good people, my father too in view ! Oh ! Joanna, his affection for me rose to my mind, adding the strongest bitter to the potion of death I had so unconsciously prepared myself—that good father little dreaming in what jeopardy was Elphine ! Another too I knew could not be far distant. Do you know, Joan,” continued she, changing her serious tone to one of sprightly indifference, “ do you know, I was a good deal surprised three years ago by seeing your old friend, Mr. Heneage ?”

“ *My* old friend, Elphine ?”

“ Well, our friend. He was here for the shooting season ; and, meeting papa at a dinner, remembered the name, I suppose, for he called the next day ; and on that one eventful day I knew he was dining at Castle Mona—and, oh ! how I wished to see him return, feeling sure he would pass along the sands, as he had promised to come to us in the evening. I hoped he would distinguish me. What good resolutions did I make and re-make in that hour, should he be destined to deliver me ;—resolutions similar to those I formed on the ‘ breakfast morning,’ at school, and, alas ! nearly as soon forgotten. He did return—I saw him—I saw the brown horse which had so often stood pawing at Fort Anne while his lazy master lingered. How both man and horse seemed then to linger, as if in mockery of my death in the midst of life ! In my impotent wrath I

shrieked, and was horribly answered by the sea-gull wheeling round the rock.

“ All was useless. I had arrived at the topmost point. Now feeling impatient and angry with Mr. Heneage for not helping me ;—then regretting, in bitterest repentance, the mood which hurried me to anger at such an hour. At last I saw a stir on the terrace. During my fit of repentance, I conclude, Bruno or his master had taken a freak for moving quicker, for I cannot suppose I was insensible, as I never lost the feeling of self-preservation. Most likely my white dress prevented people at Fort Anne from distinguishing me from the foam ; and I certainly should have perished, if some fishermen had not happily pulled past the rock just as I became utterly exhausted. They rowed me across the bay, and papa and Mr. Heneage, who had just discovered there

was a group on Conisterre, received me at the terrace steps—*there*,” said Octavia, pointing to the steps, which, vacant, and covered with sunshine, offered a full contrast to the alarming scene she had been describing.

She abruptly concluded her story, and remained in silence with her eyes on the terrace steps, as if she again saw them bear her up to the house—to the home she had so lately thought lost to her for ever.

“And what said Mr. Heneage, Octavia?”

“He!” said she starting; “oh! he seemed incapable of speaking that night, and, next day, he reprobated my imprudence in round terms. But let us return to the conservatory.”

We went;—yet Octavia was listless. It was in vain that her flowers shed their rich perfume—vain that her birds welcomed her in strains of delighted recognition. Seated on a low

chair, she hung her head and hands in despondency. I saw once more before me the Elphine of former days. Hitherto, at Fort Anne, she had been a useful, ministering friend, but this evening she entirely relapsed, and showed that the spirit of restless discontent had merely slumbered. I again found her querulous, impatient, unreasonable; and she could give no cause for such a change. To the Major's anxious inquiries, she was "quite well," though the tears, which *would* start, negatived her petulant assertion. Her changed manner threw an unhappy tone over our spirits for the evening; and when, in a voice half expository, half jesting, I tried to rally her from her humour, she answered me in a manner so totally different from any I had lately been used to observe in her, that I was glad to escape to my own room.

The next morning Octavia was evidently sorry for her wayward conduct the preceding evening; but hers was no bending spirit;—she could not bring herself to make any acknowledgment; neither could she (as some do in such cases) lavish additional attention on the neglected object. She rather avoided me, and it was to the happy entrance of an accidental visitor that we owed a re-instalment of comfortable feelings.

CHAPTER VII.

CONFESSION.

“ J'avoue que la sensibilité coûte cher quelquefois ; mais c'est une si bonne chose, qu'on ne sauroit trop la payer.”

FROM this time I saw plainly Octavia was very little changed. I had delighted, on my first arrival, in believing her the most sunny-hearted creature that ever trod the earth ; but a few short days convinced me of my error ; nay, so obstinate was the disease, that I despaired of any cure. She would argue her humour as resolutely as possible ; her chief point, however,

being an assertion that though *when* unhappy she was more miserable than her fellow-creatures,—“yet *when* happy, Joanna! oh! *when* happy, who so blessed as I am? Not you, my dear, with that calm face, which seems to say, ‘nothing can ruffle me; here I am at cool temperate, I never rise to fever heat—I never sink to——’ Oh! here comes papa, and, by the pursing up of his lips, I know he has some pleasant news for us. What have you got in that left hand, papa? I must see it,” and like a spoiled child she hung about him till she obtained her wish. “A prize! a prize! Joanna;—tickets for a Fancy ball. Oh! good, kind papa,—how shall I say thank you? My dear Joanna, how stands the thermometer now?—rising, rising, I see, in consequence of these welcome tickets!”

She tossed one towards me; it was for a Fancy

ball at Castle Mona. "I see," said Elphine, "we have twelve days for preparation; what say you?—shall we take a trip to Liverpool for dresses? Papa, will you be our escort?"

A few days were necessary to subdue the unusual excitement into which these tickets threw her. We were sitting one morning in the Octagon, calmly arranging for the hundred and first time *as what* we should go, when she exclaimed, "I wish Brooke Heneage were here, he has more genuine taste than any of the foolish, flattering set we have had perplexing us lately. I wonder in what character he would advise me to go: something quiet, gentle, and unnatural,—for quiet and gentle I am not, and never can be."

It was the first time she had mentioned Mr. Heneage since the relation of her Conisterre adventure; and as I had an idea that it was

the recollection of his advice on her imprudence which had thrown her into the wayward humour she had shown that evening, I had carefully avoided mentioning his name. Now, however, she was in a most reasonable mood, and I thought it a good opportunity for probing her little heart. “And what does it signify, Octavia, how Mr. Heneage would wish to see you dressed? I thought on Monday you had resolved to be Lydia Languish to please Mr. Dalrymple, and, on Tuesday, you said you would go as Diana, to gratify Sir Henry Howard. I fear you are a little flirt to agree with so many.”

“Oh! I only agree to disagree with them.—I am perfectly undecided,” continued she, twisting some gold fringe over her arm.

“Undecided!” repeated I, smiling, “respecting what do you mean?—your dress, or your husband?”

“Pshaw!” said she; but after a little circumlocution I learnt from her that Mr. Heneage had not changed his character; and I feared, from her account, he thought hers but little altered. Octavia acknowledged that when he first called at Fort Anne, he made himself very agreeable, and used to let Bruno stand waiting at the door a most unreasonable time; but by degrees his visits shortened.

“About the time of your accident, Elphine—did he neglect you then?”

“No! I cannot say so—he certainly was attentive just then; for though he scolded me for being so thoughtless, I believe he was rather anxious for my recovery. I had sprained my ankle a little, and was desired to lie on the sofa, and he used to read to me, and sometimes was rather agreeable—but—but—he was very touchy, and did not like any

one else to be agreeable to me, I suppose; for, if Tilly Dalrymple were with me, he would sit as silent as possible, and never join our conversation; and I had a right to talk to him if I pleased. Then Sir Henry Howard was here a good deal; but Mr. Heneage did not fancy his society either;—in short, he was a most unreasonable person, and it was evident he did not care much for my feelings, or he would not have frightened me as he did one morning. Do not scold, Joanna, and I'll tell you how it was.

“ One day, after I had recovered from my sprain, I had set out to seek bilberries on the Head, and, by accident, I met him. Well, he was in one of his most agreeable humours, though I recollect he contrived to give me a gentle lecture for protesting I believed in fate, and that *my* fate was to be drowned; but it

was a short one, and I bore it so well, that his honour felt encouraged to send his gun home, and help me to gather bilberries. On we went, sometimes gathering, but oftener idling, and, altogether, we were in danger of having a vastly insipid morning. He turned the conversation entirely his own way, and it was by no means complimentary; but it was soothing, cheering, almost tender. I began to think him vulnerable, and then the spirit of mischief possessed me. We returned by the low walk, and, unluckily met Sir Henry Howard and that simpleton Dalrymple. Imagine us so encountered!—Brooke carrying my bilberry basket on one arm, and I leaning on the other.

“I almost think it was the first time we had so walked: well, do you know, even Tilly Dalrymple looked quizzical, and Sir Henry did not scruple to banter us. Now pray do not

be angry, Joanna, but without waiting for Mr. Heneage to relieve me from their notice, I foolishly exclaimed, " Oh ! I am so glad we have met you, I am sure Mr. Heneage will be thankful to be relieved from the two burdens I have imposed on him," and instantly separating my arm from his, I joined Mr. Dalrymple, who of course was charmed at this preference. Really, Joan, I do not think I meant exactly to hurt Mr. Heneage ; I was partly annoyed by their quizzing, and partly afraid lest Mr. Heneage should think I held him too highly, and altogether I spoke thoughtlessly. The moment I had relinquished his arm, I regretted it ; but what could be done ? I could not take it again, neither could I pick up the unfortunate bilberry basket, which I every moment expected to see him hurl at my feet ; but no such thing—he very calmly raised his hat, and bidding me good

morning, added he would leave the bilberries at Fort Anne ; then closely compressing his lips, he fixed his eyes steadily on my two beaux, and bowing coolly, left us. Perhaps you will think he cut rather a ridiculous figure with his bilberry-basket—quite the contrary, I protest,—he struck into the next walk, descended the rocks, and I have no doubt had deposited his basket before I had recovered from my astonishment : nay, if he had lingered till I recovered from my self-abasement, the poor basket would never have arrived ; but look,” cried she, tossing a basket on the table, “ that is it !”

“ O Octavia, be thoughtful for once, and tell me how did you meet again ? What frightened you ? ”

“ Why his lips pressed so closely together, made me think someway—not that I had any particular reason—but I was afraid lest bad

consequences should arise between the gentlemen: and I felt that I was unworthy that Mr. Heneage should risk himself for me; nothing, however, happened, and he soon left the island."

"Did you never see him again?"

"Yes," said she, hesitating and twirling the basket round, as if she felt either absent or ashamed, "yes, he called again; but *malheureusement*, Sir Harry and his sister were here, and I thought I would not let *them* see me bend, so I played off Sir Harry in grand style."

"Dearest Octavia! and did you do this, caring for the man?"

"Why perhaps I *did* care for him, but I do not know; he comported himself in such a manner that morning, that positively I cannot bring myself to forgive him. He was so vastly

polite to Miss Howard, and so vastly civil to me, that it was quite insufferable."

"Was he careless—negligent?"

"No, no, I tell you he was so cool and collected, and easy: his behaviour tended to put Miss Howard and me so exactly on an equality, that altogether nobody would have thought he had ever cared three straws for me."

"And it may be he never did," said I, mischievously.

"May be not," replied she, quickly, "but be that as it may, he sat a very reasonable time; (actually, if he had made a hurried call I could have borne it better;) but no such thing—he stayed chatting with us all, as pleasantly as possible, till Sir Harry and Miss Howard rose to depart, and then he made a long leave-taking speech, and for the first time I discovered that it was a farewell call. I cannot tell you, Joan,

how my heart beat. “Farewell !” thought I,—
 “and before these people too—you might have
 waited !” but no—he said something about
 “compliments to Major Elphinstone,” which I
 scarcely understood ; for I had a desperate
 struggle with myself as to whether I should
 ask him to stay, or should look as if I wished
 him to stay ; but happily I got over it
 without losing my dignity. I rang the bell,
 stood and curtsied with all the apparent
 ease in the world, and he went and handed Miss
 Howard to the curricie !”

“Poor Elphine !” said I.

“Ah ! you would indeed have said ‘Poor
 Elphine,’ could you have seen me for the
 next few days. Papa was out on island
 business, and I was alone for a whole
 dreary week. But come, Joanna, now for

our dresses; you are allowing me, *à l'ordinaire*, to talk of self, when we ought to be studying effect."

CHAPTER VIII.

KIRK BRADDON.

“ We ask advice, but we mean approbation.”

Again and again Octavia changed her mind, and with it the dress with which she had in fancy clothed herself. She had set her mind on our being two characters in conjunction. If she could have been satisfied with choosing one for herself and another for me, the task

would have been comparatively easy ; but we were to be inseparables. At one time Helena and Hermia ; but then she discovered that there was nothing *distinguishing* about them, unless indeed we were to wear Cherry blossoms, and ten to one but the crowd would fancy it Orange bloom, and stamp us bride and bridesmaid.

How we ransacked Shakspeare and Scott, and the History of England ! For a whole day we were to be Beatrice and Hero ; “ we could dress the characters so well ; ” but what would they be without a Benedict ? Could she bring herself to call in the help either of Sir Harry or Mr. Dalrymple ? Fortunately she was firm against that indiscretion—no, we would stand alone ; we would be two-together-two, and at last we resolved to go as Manx peasants. It was a pretty thought, and one that pleased Major

Elphinstone, who, as well as ourselves, kept it so secret, that Sir Henry and Mr. Dalrymple expected on the very night to see us as Rosalind and Celia.

The dress of the Manx peasantry is very pretty and picturesque, so that allowing for the excusable difference of texture in which we indulged ourselves, we found it might be worked up to very good taste. Octavia was charmed with its simplicity:—"there would be no parade, nothing heavy, no folds to keep in order, —adieu to gold fringe and all ornaments, and welcome ease and simplicity!"

The Manx girls usually wear a short petticoat of grey woollen stuff, sometimes quilted, but always full; a short jacket, or, as they call it, bed-gown, is the upper garment, and this, which is generally made of striped gingham, we determined should be made of pink satin;

and the petticoat, to be as full as was required, could be made of nothing so appropriate as Irish poplin. Such a dress would not now be uncommon, for the Swiss costume lately introduced nearly resembles that of our neighbours the Manx, but at that time it was certainly a charming novelty.

The arranging of our head-dresses was a more difficult task ; Octavia rather objected to appearing with only her own beautiful hair, but as the Manx have a style peculiar to themselves of braiding their tresses in one straight band across the forehead, entirely from temple to temple, and as it was decidedly characteristic and becoming to both of us, we determined to adopt it. Much labour had our patient attendants to train our rebellious locks, but before the week was passed it was pronounced a perfectly successful alteration, and we wore

our low bands as easily as we had previously worn the flowing ringlets. Nothing now remained but something for the hands.

“We cannot go empty-handed,” said I.

“Nor is there any need,” replied Octavia. “Let me see, the ball will be on the 30th of August,—bilberries will be ripe; what say you to carrying them in Manx baskets? all the world knows the Manx baskets are truly pretty. We will go this evening to the old basket maker’s at Kirk Braddon, and order some very light ones,—though, on second thoughts, you shall sell shells and sea-weed.”

Every thing prospered during the day, and being a delightful evening, to Kirk Braddon we went, where we found the old basket-maker seated on a mat of his own fabricating, busily employed on a set of what are known as market baskets. These are made of a rush,

peculiar to the island, and the better to carry provisions, are shaped at the bottom to stand on the ground, something between what children make in paper and agree to call boats, and the carpenter's flag-baskets. I agreed that they would suit us admirably ; and after orders to make them very light, but not to lose their characteristic shape, Octavia began to talk to the old man of his family and condition ; she gradually brought him to speak Manx to her, and as she had already a smattering of the language, she determined to use all her endeavours to learn, at least sufficient to jabber on the eventful evening. The basket maker, who at first felt rather shy at speaking his gipsy-like jargon to so fine a lady, soon became delighted with her affability ; and Elphine returned home with a tolerable stock of every-day questions and answers. She

told the old man, at parting, we should go again soon that I might have a lesson, but I was exceedingly dull, and never got beyond “Kish tha ju?” and “Bra-bra-guda myho.” As soon as we reached home, Octavia employed herself in committing to paper, in her own orthography, the sentences she had learnt; and a few evenings afterwards we went again to the romantic village, where she acquired, not only an addition to her vocabulary, but also to her dress. The first time we had visited the basket-maker his wife was from home, but while we loitered this evening, she returned from her daily occupation, and Elphine’s quick eye soon noted that she wore a most lucky hat. Now this hat was nothing more nor less than the large flat hat worn fifty years ago by our grandmothers, but now seldom seen, except on old market women.

It was nearly round, with a little low crown set thickly round with short bows, and altogether being made of rusty black silk, sadly soiled, would never have caught my attention ; —not so Octavia, her eyes rivetted on the old woman's head, she exclaimed, “ Ah ! *nous voila au comble !* the only thing wanting ; behold us now, Joanna, armed *cap-à-pied* ; the hat--the hat alone was wanting !” and to the astonishment of the old man, Elphine bought the hat for a few shillings.

“ Shillings—*English* too,” murmured he as he sat wondering at the young lady's whim and generosity.

Elphine's head was well nigh turned before the much-thought-of 30th of August. If she walked she danced, if she slept she dreamt, if she spoke she sang ; in fact, her heart was full of this Fancy ball, and her whole

heart shone in her face. A piece of news which I expected would complete the delirium, quieted her wonderfully. This was no other than, that Captain Heneage and his brother were expected to arrive a few days previous to the 30th, on a visit to Lord Henry Murray, and of course we should see them at the ball. No sooner did she know this, than Octavia was a changed creature; she seemed literally sobered; she dreaded, yet wished to see Mr. Heneage. She longed to make her peace with him; but I suspect she was so well aware of the interest he had in her affections, that she feared even herself should discover that as a motive. How often did she wonder in what character he would go, how he would like hers, how he would meet her? Dress no longer occupied her entire thoughts; well was it that she had made every requisite preparation, for she no

longer inspected the sit of her jacket, or of her petticoat; no more walks to Kirk Braddon, no more lessons in Manx, no more practising steps; and as all this had been done before, it was quite as well for her to take a little rest. I began, however, to fear they were not destined to meet, for day followed day, and no Brooke Heneage appeared. Octavia's greatest pleasure seemed now to sit at her Octagon window and watch the arrival of the packets from England:—alas! packet succeeded packet, but no interesting arrival. The evening of the 29th found her still at her post. I was sitting in the room stringing sea-weed berries for our necklaces. “Jane tells me,” said I, “that these would look better with caps; I fancy not,—but what do you think Octavia?”

“Eh?” said she, starting.

“Should you prefer caps?”

“Mercy, no! what could we do with them under those flat hats? but come here—quick, quick.”

I laughed at her abstraction, and should perhaps have rallied her on it, had she not called my attention to what entirely absorbed hers. It was the English packet full in sight; the evening was fine, and the deck seemed crowded with passengers. Something scarlet being visible, Elphine decided that the Heeneages were of the group, but the vessel was still at some distance, and Major Elphinstone engrossed the telescope on the terrace:—when it neared, we could distinctly see each individual that composed the party—male and female thronged the deck. As the packet passed along, Elphine leaned heavily on my shoulder and lowered her eyes, as if she

thought her feelings would be read by those on deck, among whom I recognized the two brothers so long looked for. Brooke stood forward looking intently at Fort Anne, on which he was evidently remarking to a lady at his side—he fixed the telescope in her hand, and at length actually pointed to the Fort. “Ah ! he bows, Elphine, he sees the Major !—now they have passed.”

“ Thank goodness ! ”

“ That he has arrived, or passed, Elphine ? ”

“ Oh ! passed,” said she, raising herself and sitting down quietly to my beads. “ My dear, these must be capped, they must indeed ; I wonder I could be so blind : but to make amends, I’ll send Jane immediately into the town, for it will be a tedious affair, and to-morrow morning you know we shall be engaged gathering our Bilberries.” From the moment

she was assured of Mr. Heneage's arrival, Octavia resumed her interest in her dress and appointments: this evening she tried on her pretty Manx dress, and it was not partiality which made us think, and the fond father declare, that there would not be so charming a figure at Castle Mona.

"Ma'am," said the maid, "did you ever see so sweet a dress? did you *ever*?"

"Why, Jane, I am very sorry to disappoint you, but I really must say I once did."

"Oh! not possible, ma'am,—I cannot believe it, ma'am; excuse me, but unless you could tell me the pattern, and what it was made of, I cannot by any possibility think it any way possible."

"But then, Jane, I can tell you what it was made of,—plain white gauze with white trimmings."

“ Oh ! poor, ma’am, it never could any way be compared with this lovely striped jacket,” urged the Abigail, going behind her mistress, and retreating with her admiring eyes rivetted on the pretty creature before us.

“ And yet, Jane,” said I, “ when I tell you it was Miss Elphinstone who wore it, perhaps you may conceive it was worthy of admiration.”

“ Oh ! ma’am”—began she in reply.

“ Ah ! that was the prettiest dress I ever had,” interrupted Elphine ; “ I really think I prefer white gauze to every thing.”

“ Except a train, and a black hat, my dear.”

“ Oh ! *chacune à son tour*—I have not got to the black hat yet.”

The next morning proved as pleasant as the most anxious young lady could desire ; consequently we spent it in filling Octavia’s basket

with Bilberries, and in gathering some beautiful specimens of Heath to decorate the little grey hats. On returning home, Octavia's eye instantly seized a card which lay on the hall table.

“Mr. Heneage's compliments, ma'am, and he regretted you were not at home, for he wished to introduce the young lady that was with him.”

“What young lady, Jones?”

“He asked her for a card, ma'am, but she said, ‘No, as Miss Elphinstone does not know me, better not,—we shall meet this evening.’”

The evening of the 30th was come; the sands to Castle Mona were lined with carriages of various sorts and sizes. Many no sooner had deposited their proper owners, than they were hurried back to Douglas to fetch friends or relations. Happy they who could claim

kindred with a carriage family ; still happier those who owned one ! Major Elphinstone went early, in compliment to the Duke ; his daughter and myself preferred arriving later. “ Let us,” said she, “ see this medley to every advantage—let the rooms be full—let us be dazzled by the lights and the gaudy dresses—let us have a view of them in action,—’twill be so tedious to go early and see them drop in by degrees—to know that when the Dewints are arrived, the carriage will be just fifteen minutes fetching the Lardners. I should never lose the sensation of yawning the whole evening ;—no, no, we will be none of the spectators, we mean to be actors.”

When we were dressed, surveyed, approved, and had given orders for the carriage, Elphine appeared rather more fluttered than I anticipated—“ Oh, Joan, does not your heart beat ?”

“ Yes, a good deal ; but then I do not know her Grace, and you do.”

“ As to that, her Grace will not trouble you or any one else much. She is always at home herself, and wishes every body to be the same ; but I am so anxious about the young lady with Brooke Heneage. How odd of her to come with him this morning ! Why not have waited till Lady Henry could come with her ?”

“ Perhaps she did not approve of his calling on Miss Elphinstone alone. Who knows what interest she may have in the gentleman ?”

“ Ah ! I had not thought much of that ;” and Octavia was silent till we had passed Conisterre. “ Beautiful Conisterre ! look Joanna, how tranquil it lies—beautiful !—beautiful ! I do not think there will be any thing more to my taste at this vaunted Fancy ball. I’ll remember to tell you as we pass, on our

return, whether the dancing shapes at Castle Mona can bear comparison with those fleecy waves, sporting round its rugged, yet merciful rocks. Though I never was a philosopher, yet, when a child, it used to be a favourite whim of mine to say to myself, ‘I’ll remember so and so the next time I walk this way, or the next time I read this book;’ and even now, I often wonder, when reading a work with a friend, what I shall think of such and such passages when next I take up the volume. Have you ever such fancies, Joan?—but you, I suppose, would term them notices of your experience. Well, adieu to my fancies; for behold us at Castle Mona in reality.”

CHAPTER IX.

CASTLE MONA.

“ Quelque haut qu’une beauté porte la tête, elle touche des pieds à la terre.”

THE Duchess of Athol received her guests in the saloon ; and there I was introduced to her. She was in full court-dress, and welcomed Octavia with particular attention, complimented us on our dresses, and passed us to Major Elphinstone, who was standing near her Grace, waiting to convoy us to the ball-room. At the

door we were met by the Duke, and Lord Henry Murray. His Grace, as “a Scotch laird,” rubbed his hands joyously to see so many “bonnie lasses,” and gaily touched Elphine’s cheek to see if she were rouged. His graver brother whispered something in her ear, which called up a brighter blush: but, quickly recovering herself, she gracefully presented her basket, and made her speech to his Grace, requesting him to *handsel* her bilberries. The Duke was enraptured; — her dress, her fruit, her appearance, but, above all, her Manx, charmed him. He snatched her hand, and, leading her into the middle of the room, “A hall, a hall,” he cried, “wha’s for a reel? A reel, my bonnie lads and lasses, what say ye?”

In my life I never saw so charming a picture. Imagine a long gallery crowded with

people, dressed in the most picturesque style, as if vieing with the still quainter dresses of the figures which covered the walls. The Duke, a lively mortal, with just sufficient youth in his looks to contradict his fatherly dress and manners, drew the lovely Elphine, sadly loth, into the most conspicuous part of the room, her bilberry basket hanging from her arm; while, from the suddenness of the movement, her *shanty* hat (as Captain Heneage called it) had dropped from her head, and lay on the floor. The very hat was a necessary object in the group;—exactly so would I wish to have Elphine pourtrayed—her head turned back, looking childishly anxious for the pretty grey hat.

I had seen Mr. Heneage the moment I entered the room, through a vista of the clus-

tering heads ; he was standing nearly opposite to the door, beside an old lady in a hoop and furbelows. He was one of the first to clap his hands at the Duke's merry action, and flew forward to snatch the hat ;—Sir Henry Howard did the same ;—but Mr Heneage, by dexterously sliding towards the prize, seized it, and offered it to Miss Elphinstone. She took it ; and, without speaking, presented her bilberries. Her timid glance was a tacit enreaty for forgiveness ; and as such he seemed to interpret it ; and, without a word on either side, both appeared to feel that all was forgotten.

The ball was opened by a reel of four—the Duke and Miss Elphinstone, Sir Henry Howard and Miss Murray. During the dance Mr. Heneage renewed his acquaintance with me ; and requested leave to introduce his friend

Mrs. Margery Brackenbury to me, and immediately led me to the ancient dame with whom I had first observed him. She was standing at the top of the room, fanning herself with an enormous fan of peacock's feathers. I was struck, as I approached her, by her very starched appearance.

"How old is she?" whispered my companion.

"Sixty," returned I; though the bright black eye contradicted my guess.

"She calls herself sweet twenty-two," said he; "but we know better."

She was a woman rather above the common height; of an amazingly stiff figure, which she held as erect as possible. She stood; her arms held a respectful space from her stiff pompadour gown, which also seemed in fear; for it stood at an awful distance from her figure.

She wore high-heeled shoes, too, which caused her to lean a little forward; and the grotesque of this position was increased by her regular motion of fanning. For worlds could not I have checked a laugh. Oh! she was by far the most bizarre creature in the room;—her mouth, drawn down into the most formal puckerings, was constantly moving nervously, as if to prevent all indecorous smiles;—her rouged face was marked with the lines of age; she wore a lofty head dress *à l'antique*, but what astonished me most was a large, modern shawl which was thrown over her arm; and which, being neither new nor handsome, seemed quite out of place with her dress.

When Mr. Heneage had with the utmost gravity pronounced the words, “Mrs. Margery Brackenbury—Miss Fane,” I fancied the name had certainly been familiar to me before;

but I had not time to recollect, for the old lady promptly opened the conversation by a splenetic comparison between the entertainments of the present day, and those when *she* was a girl, Mr. Heneage seeming to take a mischievous pleasure in drawing her into an argument. “Why, my good lady, you surely do not maintain that you had any meetings to compare with this! Look at this delightful mass of happy faces, all speaking countenances, saying in most eloquent English, ‘I mean to be happy the livelong night, and I advise you to be the same.’”

“I only see,” said Mrs. Margery, “a crowd of people, who seem to think of nothing but elbowing each other for the best places; all is vulgar haste, and selfishness, and art: not an atom of ease is there in this immense room. Look first at the group now dancing, how excessively

out of character they are!—a peer, who would shine in a drawing-room, is making himself ridiculous by dancing a Scotch reel with a country girl, who is, however, the only one that has exhibited a shadow of nature to-night, so I will be merciful to her, and merely say the poor creature looks sadly out of place, and appears as if she would be thankful when that never-ending, still-beginning reel is over. What think you, madam?” continued she, addressing a lady in a Dalmatian dress, who now approached, leaning on the Knave of Hearts.

“O! ma belle mère, let me introduce you to Miss Fane, an old playfellow of mine,” cried Captain Hencage, for it was that worthy who had chosen this ludicrous character.

“Ma belle mère!” I wondered which was to prove the mother, the Dalmatian, or L’Antique.

Brooke guessed my perplexity, and taking

the hand of the former, said, "This lady is our mother; to Mrs. Margery we claim but very distant relationship—eh, Charles?"

"Not so very distant," replied the Captain; "Mrs. Margery and I were amusing ourselves, *en voyage*, by tracing it, and we made out we were second cousins. I remember it perfectly, because she said it was just near enough to make marriage a sin, and therefore desirable."

The old maid vehemently disclaimed.

"Well, then, you thought so, and I said so," persisted the rattlepate.

Mrs. Margery fanned herself violently, and turned away with Mrs. Heneage, descanting on the degenerate morals and manners of the age, not, however, till she had shot some most severe glances at Captain Heneage. He flew after her, to make his peace, and Brooke exclaimed, "Bless the merry Duke, how happy he seems,

—do, Miss Fane, take pity on an envious mortal, who longs to join that dancing set; come.”

Just, however, as he spoke, the reel ended, and his Grace brought Octavia almost breathless to rest herself.

“ Here, you beaux, I leave you to quarrel for my charming Manx lassie; make them all talk Manx, my dear,—do not believe one of their compliments, unless it is in real Manx. Well, good bye;—dance—I have set you an excellent example. You can none of you beat me at the Highland fling. Miss Elphinstone would not try, or else her dress is just the thing,—eh! —wha’s this? O Captain, what are trumps?”

“ Hearts, if I turn up.”

“ Eh! very good, very good—must tell that to the Duchess. Hearts indeed! oh! you

knave ! Well,* well, get rested as soon as you can, for here is Sir Harry coming to claim you, my bonnie lass,—sad knave that, sad knave !”

I was sorry for this, and so I dare say was Elphine. I had quite calculated on Brooke Heneage’s asking her ; however, she bore the disappointment good humouredly, and joined the set with Sir Harry Howard. Brooke offered his arm to me, and I saw he was expecting that we were partners.

Elphine shone pre-eminent in this dance ; her manners so correct, no elevation at having been selected by the Duke ; on the contrary, she seemed sedulously careful to be particularly on her guard to prove that she was not intoxicated by the flattering notice bestowed on her. This was always the case with Miss Elphinstone : like most proud people, she found

it easier to be meek, when others would be elated, than agreeable when not excited. She lived but in excitation ; like those flowers which close their leaves when the sun's rays are withdrawn, so she flagged and drooped and faded, if not supplied with the sunshine of notice. It was also observed in her that she was often agreeable to her inferiors, when wayward, and negligent to some, certainly her equals, perhaps superiors. This natural trait probably savoured more of those shared by the generality of women, than many perceptible in Octavia's character. It is one which may be seen in every grade of life ; the Duchess, who would be reserved to a Baroness, will be enchanting to the country Gentleman's lady ; so the Curate's wife, in her turn, will move stiffly to the rich farmer's wife, when the next moment she hesitates not to stop and chat with the

sexton's. You may also observe much difference in the deportment of the sexes. I question whether the farmer would have been passed in the distant manner his wife was noticed. Nay, the Baron himself familiarly hands her Grace to her carriage, while his Lady is saluted with a proud bend of nodding plumes,—and all this is explained by one word—vanity. And have I not said that our governess, Mrs. Manners, planted vanity in the hearts of all her pupils, where the soil was favourable. Alas ! that so rank a weed should have been fostered as a garden plant, when it ought to have been carefully rooted up and eradicated from the heart.

When the dance was ended, and before Brooke Heneage had an opportunity of joining Octavia, Lady Henry Murray had introduced her visitor, “Mrs. Margery Brackenbury,” to

her, and Elphine's quicker eye instantly discovered what mine had not.

“ Madge, my dear Madge, this is indeed more happiness than I could have hoped for,—O Joan, Joan, come and see our dear little playfellow, Madge Brackenbury ! ”

It was indeed that bonny girl shot up into a full blown woman, whether lovely or not I could hardly determine, for except her bright glancing eye, every feature was disguised to personify the old coquette, in Madame Tussaud's collection of composition figures, which I have before mentioned as having amused us when at school,—on Madge they must have made a strong impression, though not exactly in Mrs. Manners's phrase, as “ helps to history.” Certainly she had succeeded entirely in her attempt, and was confessedly the most *original copy* in the room; the chalked wrinkles

on her youthful cheeks were evidently drawn by an artist's hand, and Captain Heneage vaunted how his opinion had been deemed indispensable in declaring "when she was old enough," and how he had mercilessly added year upon year, knowing, as he laughingly said, that there would still be left enough of

"Witchery,

When beamed the soul from her dark eye."

During the next dance, Madge and Octavia were inseparable. In a shaded recess they sat and talked volubly on the present, past, and future. Octavia learnt that Miss Brackenbury was visiting Mrs. Heneage, in Cumberland, when the invitation from Lord Henry Murray arrived, and was easily prevailed on to join the party in a trip to the sweet little island.

“ The ball itself,” said Madge, “ was a great inducement ; but nothing when compared with meeting you, Elphine. Oh ! my dear friend, I cannot tell you half the anxiety I felt to know which was Fort Anne, and I could not keep away from you this morning, though Captain Heneage very much wished you not to know me, or to know I was here, till this evening ; however, it happened fortunately that you were out, for I could not rest till I tried to see you, and the attempt served to pass time. Captain Heneage and Brooke said I should not know you, and they were so artful as not to tell me Miss Fane was here ; so seeing you both dressed alike, I *might* have been deceived into thinking you were sisters ; and more than that,” continued Madge, interrupting herself, in her old way, “ more than that, Brooke brought up an odd sort of gentleman as

Dr. Syntax, whom I guess he suborned to declare that you were coming as Rosalind, so that I hunted among the male creation, expecting to see you *en homme*, but the moment, the *very* moment you entered, I knew you ! Yes, I am so pleased to think I knew your hair, twisted as it is. My dear Elphine, how long is it since I placed the shell-rose in your hair ? ”

Elphine’s blushes were spared by Captain Heneage, who came up, Dr. Syntax following with a most rueful countenance.

“ Ah ! ” cried chattering Madge, “ here comes my unknown ; now I’ll ask why he persisted in declaring you were Rosalind ; ” but the Captain stopped her by presenting Mr. Matthew Dalrymple, who earnestly requested the honour of Mrs. Margery Brackenbury’s hand in a minuet. Miss Brackenbury, with all the ease of fashion, added to total

ignorance of her partner, immediately rose ; and the worthy doctor offered her, with a profound bow, the tip of his third finger. Captain Heneage took Miss Elphinstone up the room, and, on his way, explained to her that he had entrapped Tilly into this exhibition, by making him believe it was at the express desire of the Duchess.

“ He was monstrously obstinate,” continued he, “ and, for a long while, I actually despaired of prevailing on him ; but, at last, I carried my point by a *coup-de-main*. I led him boldly up to her Grace, having first persuaded her she ought to have a screen ; and trusting a good deal to her usual absence, added to the extraordinary press of etiquette on her hands, I got her to say ‘ Yes, do now, ‘Tilly,’ very distinctly, so here is he, poor fellow, going to make a glorious exhibition,

while the Duchess thinks he is seeking her screen. But that puts me in mind that *I* must get it ; so excuse me a few moments."

He very cavalierly left Miss Elphinstone standing alone : and though it was alone in a crowd, she felt relieved when one of the young Murrays joined her ; though, a moment after, she wished he had not done so. The first question, of course, was " Are you engaged ?" and though she longed to say she meant to sit still during the next set, she knew it was a useless postponement ; so once more had said, " no," when Brooke Heneage hastened with me to put the same question to her. He engaged her for the following set, and kept near her. Very soon the motley mass was seen clearing away from the centre of the room ; gradually a space was formed, every one appearing naturally to file off, and yet

all looking their inquiries of “What is to be done?”

It was a question, however, which none could answer; but presently the Duchess was seen, leaning on Captain Heneage, advancing up the room. At the same moment the band began a grave minuet. The captain waved his hand majestically to Dr. Syntax, who instantly stepped out from the crowd with his fair partner.

“Good Heavens!—this is Charles’s trick, I have no doubt;—and poor Madge!—what a shameful trick!” exclaimed Brooke Heneage and Miss Elphinstone together.

But it was too late;—Tilly led her forward, keeping an awful distance from her hoop, and holding her fingers as if they burnt his. The Duchess, who by this time discovered that people were standing instead of dancing, raised

her glass to the couple exhibiting; and her look of surprise seemed the signal for the most indecorous laughter—there was not a dissentient muscle; all laughed but Tilly and Mrs. Margery. She resolutely kept up to her character of the old coquette; and her severe look and determined minuet movement seemed to inspire Tilly with the spirit of *La veille cour*. He bowed “most gloriously,” as Captain Heneage protested; and after being once or twice *thrown* by his partner, so as nearly to lose his balance, plucked up some energy, and swung round to admiration. It was an excellent exhibition, and kept up our spirits through the evening wonderfully; indeed nothing more grotesque could be imagined than this “ancient couple.” Tilly’s figure was exactly the Doctor’s, and his fearful, rueful countenance constantly turned towards Miss Brackenbury with a look

of “what am I to do next?” revived the laugh every moment it appeared to flag. Then his increased velocity of movement was highly amusing: and, being perceived by Captain Heneage, he waggishly quickened the time of the music; and now they were seen moving quicker and quicker—then they whirled and whirled;—while the Duke *stooped* to laugh, and Captain Heneage clapped his hands in unfeigned rapture! He seemed to possess the same power over Madge as the showman over Punchinello; for she moved by his eye, and the whisking of her hoop at last actually blinded us all with chalk-dust, and made us shed tears of attestation, in which every one was alike affected;—never was there a greater medley engaged with pocket handkerchiefs than at this crisis. Peers, ploughboys, princes—clowns, countesses and country girls—

generals, Jews, gentlemen—sweeps, Swiss, and Scotch—every one applauded till every one was tired.

Breathless, at length, Tilly looked entreatingly at the Duchess, who, in her turn, inquired of Captain Heneage what he could mean; for the twist of the beseeching countenance spoke so distinctly that it could not be mistaken.

“Amusing *me*! Captain Heneage. I have thought them bewildered these many minutes.—Oh! for mercy’s sake stop them and relieve us.”

Tilly made another bow to Mrs. Margery, concluding with a tremendous shake of the head as a finale; then gallantly drawing her arm through his, he led her off in triumph. The Duke loudly applauded them; and the whole company followed their steps to witness the airs which the lady gave herself in repressing

the *empressement* of the beau ; who, being now quite relieved from his false shame, and elated by the plaudits bestowed, ran into the opposite extreme, and pestered her with his excessive attentions. Madge, however, true to her character, frowned him into more moderate demeanour, and employed him unmercifully in her ceaseless errands : her huge fan—her glove—her essences—all required three or four removals ; and the worthy Doctor was only released from active duty by a summons to refreshments. Here poor Octavia, as the partner of Mr. Murray, was again separated from those she would have preferred ; and though placed by him at the upper end, I fancied, from her frequent glances towards us, she would gladly have dispensed with honour for pleasure. I was near Mrs. Heneage and her party, which also included Mr. Dalrymple. Dancing re-

commenced immediately after supper. I heard Brooke Heneage say to Octavia, *en passant*, "Remember you are engaged to me for the next;"—but the next she did not dance; for by some unlucky chance, her weak ancle twisted while dancing with Mr. Murray, and again she was an object of public attention; for Major Elphinstone was obliged to carry her into the saloon, and thence to the carriage, as she was quite unable to return to the ball-room.

CHAPTER X.

ELPHINE AT HOME.

Women may wear gold and pearls abroad ; but there is nothing like the coral of content for every day wear.

OCTAVIA had enjoyed the ball so much, that her spirits promised to hold out during the drive home, though she was suffering extreme pain ; she chatted so incessantly on the way, that she completely deceived her father into a hope that the ankle was not much hurt.

“ See Joan—see Conisterre ! now I do re-

member to look for it ; but the moon is down, and it is scarcely to be distinguished. Beautiful it is still, however, even with that thick mist enveloping it. Papa, I never saw Conisterre look as it does now. I have seen it in storm and in clouds, in sunshine and in showers, but never with this indistinct, mysterious appearance—did you, papa ?”

Major Elphinstone only answered by pressing his daughter closely to him, as if to assure himself of her safety.

“ I am quite safe *now*, dear papa, but—I have touched my ankle,” and she burst into tears, caused by so long suppressing her feelings of suffering.

We soon reached home, and every care was taken of Octavia ; who, however, was found to have given her ankle another very severe sprain. Again she was declared a close pri-

scner, and for some time she bore it admirably; for, during the first few days it was a novel thing to sit on a sofa surrounded by frequent callers, and feel herself the point of attraction to each; but after a while circumstances arose which rendered her confinement more irksome.

Lady Henry Murray took Mrs. Heneage and Miss Brackenbury on a tour through the island, and the gentlemen agreed to meet them near the Calf, whither they were gone on a shooting excursion. For two days after their departure, Octavia exerted herself to preserve her spirits; but even during these two days I saw it *was* achieved by exertion arising from a proper sense of conscious shame; the third day her spirits gave way, and on the fourth she made no effort to maintain them: languid, low, and fretful, she passed her hours

in wilful unhappiness. True, many of her sources of pleasure were closed for the present, but a regulated mind would have turned to those which were still within her reach ; and a tractable spirit would have suffered itself to be led to them ; but alas ! Octavia's was none of these. Seen casually, or by those who were strangers to her disposition, Octavia appeared a singularly enviable being ; she shone as a happy creature, through the bright halo which the partiality of her friends and the peculiarity of her manners shed around her. She was affectionate and ardent, but these feelings added nothing to her felicity. For a person to seize and follow any new plan with earnestness, too often shows only a restlessness in former pursuits ; it often evinces an unfavourable disposition of the habits, an ill-confirmed dedication to virtue ;

and when these are found in a woman of more than ordinary talents, the chances are great that they entail misery on the possessor. Octavia had read many books, some that might have been better left unread ; —she read all eagerly, and adopted the tone and conclusion of each author, without pausing to inquire into the truth of his positions, or investigating the solidity of his arguments. Thence she imbibed some new errors, and strengthened many old ones, but fortunately, her haste exceeded her memory, and with her, a book laid aside was usually a book forgotten, and the author last perused the one most esteemed ; and it was certain that the more singular the notions he conveyed, the more secure he was of her attention ; consequently, it rarely happened that she perused a work of imagination without contriving to

identify herself with its contents, either by discovering a similarity of sentiment, or by appropriating some of its circumstances, incidents, or feelings. Singular and extravagant opinions may be excellencies in wit, but they are errors, or worse than errors, in judgment. Octavia was far from being considered selfish, even by those who looked on her with eyes of discovery, and her near friends would, doubtless, have considered it little short of profanation to accuse her of it; yet, dearly as I loved her, I could find no word which more clearly expressed my conception of her faults. She was incessantly intent on herself; and that was not the worst, she fancied every one else intent on the same object: was she in company?—she believed every word, action, or glance, had reference to herself, and was accordingly elevated to joy, or depressed by

imaginary neglect ; she imagined it impossible any thing could be done, said, or looked, without motive and intention, therefore she frequently set down motives and intentions to actions and looks the most innocent. Being thus in her library as well as in her life given to identify herself with whatever she perused, and never dreaming that she could resemble any faulty character portrayed, she continued to view herself as the original of every picture that pleased her fancy—the breather of every sentiment which chanced to assimilate with the temperament which might then absorb her. All this time it never occurred to her that many of these resemblances which struck her as wonderfully coincident, were frequently slight, faulty, and not infrequently *adopted* on the spur of the moment, merely because singular, new, or interesting.

These notions, added to her previous stock, were often called into sudden service, and probably hurried their adopter into critical positions, either of words or actions, which drew on her applause or censure, as her auditors might determine. Indeed I discovered, that the *capital error* of Octavia's character was this extreme absorption of feeling, which had been sown by her governess, by whom she was almost *taught* to consider herself the child to whom most consideration was due ; it had been fostered by her school-fellows, whose interest it might be thus to flatter her foibles and inflame her vanity. No wonder then, that her father, when he brought her to his hearth, feeling blessed with her society, joying in her youth, her bloom,—her rich affections all his, and his for the first time,—no wonder that he strengthened rather than attempted to eradicate

that which, in fact, he never saw,—which, if pointed out to him, would, probably, have been considered as a monstrous impossibility—imperfection where all was perfect.

It is too probable, that on her first arrival at home, these faulty feelings would not be uppermost in Miss Elphinstone's constitution; novelty was the elixir of her life, and supplied with THAT, *self* would be soothed, if not laid asleep. On first reaching Douglas, home, father, liberty, all were new and consequently attractive; happy had it been for Octavia if, at this crisis, she had been blessed with a mother who could have fixed her unsettled mind on the *only* subject ever discovered sufficiently *sedative* to engross woman's wandering thoughts,—domestic affairs. Had she seen in the practice of a mother, that in soberly regulating her family affairs, solicitously providing for her

children, tenderly consulting the happiness of her husband, and carefully ministering to the comforts of her dependents, are comprized the chief worldly duties and the charities of woman ; she would have learnt, that the exercise of these privileges cherishes in the heart the best and most beautiful feelings of nature,—feelings which constitute the charm of existence, blessing the possessor by that proud consciousness of virtue which they raise, and winning the beholder by the warm glow of native elegance which they exhibit : such a woman lives not for herself, she lives for the husband she honours, the children she fosters, and the friends she delights to entertain !

I have said, that I had hitherto seen Octavia's spirits supported by the anticipation or reality of pleasure and enjoyment ; I was now to mourn over her in a series of miseries

which she inflicted on herself and friends without hesitation or compunction. Till she went with the tourists, no day passed without Miss Brackenbury's coming to Fort Anne to sit and converse with Octavia; and either accidentally or intentionally Captain or Mr. Heneage always called in time to escort her back to Douglas; it more frequently happened with the latter than with Captain Heneage; and while it lasted was a circumstance of considerable satisfaction to Octavia, but true to her besetting sin, distortion, no sooner were they gone (Sir Henry Howard too gone with them, and she and I left with no daily caller to rely on but Mr. Dalrymple,) than she extracted gall from the last drop of honey she had tasted, and gave herself up to the idea that it was to enjoy the company of Madge that Brooke Heneage had so often wandered to

Fort Anne. With her usual candour she communicated her opinion to me, and, sooth to say, I did not feel myself justified in affording her the consolation I saw she hoped to derive from me—a contradiction of her surmise. Even if I had felt more persuaded than I actually did of the state of Mr. Heneage's sentiments, I should not have dared to nourish the feelings which it was very evident were springing in Octavia's breast, still less when I felt an almost equal doubt with herself on the subject. That he should admire Octavia was natural, for she was calculated to excite admiration, and the gentleman possessed sufficient delicacy of taste, but he joined to it a sober clearness of discernment, a discrimination of character, a quiet fearlessness of expression, which, while it assured me he could not but discover the

specks in Octavia's character, taught me that he would not hesitate to crush any feelings her charms were likely to raise, if he found them likely to be inimical to his happiness. *I feared* this, for he was of all men the one I conceived calculated, by circumstances and character, to influence a change in Octavia's character. In the first place, he had sufficient personal and mental advantages to ensure a high place in her esteem and affection; in the next, his temper was so happily contrasted with her own, as to appear likely to check its effects in the only way admissible by such a nature as hers. His manners were gentle, persuasive, and to an inattentive observer might have seemed facile, but to me, they were the index to a mind and opinions the most firm and the best regulated; he seldom angered Octavia by thwarting her hu-

mour or disputing her opinion, but I observed that he never, by any chance, yielded where his judgment differed: and this, which to her eyes presented a blank subject of retrospection, was to me the source of the only certainty I could feel in the matter. I hoped it argued an interest in her improvement, which if not originally derived from settled affection, was most likely to lead to it, and to its course I silently consigned my friend's chance of happiness on this score. It was certainly to be expected, that after the unusual excitement she had been thrown into, she would find it difficult to regain a placid equanimity, more especially as such a state was entirely foreign to her nature; and I could not do otherwise than pity this dear creature, whom I had so lately seen realizing her picture of pleasure, only to prelude a state

of suffering and irksome confinement, which we were assured was the only surety for eventual cure. With all my power I tried to dissipate the languor which at first stole on her, and this I found an easier task than to allay the irritation which she presently indulged. Ten weary days passed, and the only circumstance which occurred to rouse her from fancied to real uneasiness, was a note from Miss Brackenbury—it told of a very agreeable tour and no less pleasant sojourn at Castletown, whence it was dated. “The only drawback from my pleasure,” she wrote, “is the recollection that my dear Elphine is suffering while I am enjoying. Do, my dear creature, be sure to rest that unfortunate ankle, and be quite *well* when we return, (this day week,) but I shall lay most especial commands on the beau-bearer

to inquire whether you justify the name of patient, and how far I may hope to find you recovered. We all hope Major Elphinstone will be prevailed on to return with him to join this party to the Calf, which seems to be the only thing thought of at present. How I hope for long letters from you and dear Joanna! Oh! the impatience of men! I have nearly done—heighday! *not* going? well then, Sir Harry will tell you the why and the wherefore. —What weathercocks are these men!” Now this letter was brought by a boy, who did not, certainly, “fly as soon as it was delivered,” for he staid to leave a long unintelligible message, something about a gentleman, and a horse, and a gun!—but whether the gentleman could not come because he *had* a gun and a horse, or because he was seeking them, we

could not make out. The Major was not in the way, so we had nothing but woman's wits for it, till just when we had for the fiftieth time wondered who was to have brought it, who *did* bring it, why the first person alluded to did *not* bring it, and who and where the real bearer was, came good-natured Tilly Dalrymple, to tell us he had met Sir Henry Howard and the Major on the south parade, hurrying to the gunsmith's, and they had despatched him to inform Miss Elphinstone she might expect both gentlemen to a late dinner.

“Then it was Sir Henry brought the note,” said Octavia.

“What note?” replied Tilly, “I know of no notes,—all I know is, the Major and he were hastening to Wingate's, and says I, ‘Hey! Sir Harry, where did you spring from?’ for I had

no notion, you are aware, that he would return before Lord Henry and his party. Well, no answer did he give me, but stuck the butt-end of his gun against my mouth, and ‘Ah! good Tilly, says he, don’t interrupt us, for we are on a matter of life and death;’ (meaning their guns, you are aware;) and the Major says, ‘Do, Tilly, step up to Fort Anne, and tell my daughter not to expect me at home till six, and Sir Harry will dine with us.’ So they bolted into Wingate’s, and I stepped up. And now, my good Miss Fane, how is the ankle? Your patient looks a little feverish—rather flushed. Not seen Danby to-day? No, he is sent for to poor Smith, — Blood Smith I should say, or he would be offended, even if he were dying;—now, Miss Fane, in the absence of the surgeon, might I advise? You

are aware that the flush on Miss Elphinstone's cheek is caused by the irritation of the swollen part, now what do you say to a cataplasm of oatmeal and vinegar?—you are aware—”

“I'll tell you, Mr. Dalrymple, what I am aware of,” said Octavia, “that you play the piano much better than the doctor—do, you good creature, enchant Miss Fane by an air *con variazione*.”

With the most obliging obedience he moved to the instrument.

“Are you aware, Miss Elphinstone,” said he, “how Millar, the blind musician, finds the piano the moment he enters a room?—he is stone blind Miss Fane, but the most exquisite performer,—all ear, of course—well, he is very *recherché*, as you may imagine, has the *entré* of Castle Mona, and so on, but if he goes into

a strange room he stands so—‘hush !’—then you are aware every one is mute ; then he stamps —so—and catching the sound of the strings, he flies to the instrument—so”—suited the action to the word, Tilly flew and seated himself on the music-stool, and moving his head and body in strict time with the piece, played an old air with variations of his own composing. There was something so obliging and good-natured in Mr. Dalrymple, that one could not help tolerating his foibles in return for his obedient compliance with the many and manifold commissions, requests, messages, &c. &c., which were entrusted to him. His obtuseness to ridicule, concealed or open, was so extreme, that it positively blunted the edge of satire, and relieved him from many a sarcasm and attempt at quizzing : the very fact of his being a known

butt freed him from all the usual penalties of the character, and Tilly Dalrymple lived on pleasing himself by pleasing every body else, and perhaps contributing more to the happiness of the society in Douglas than any other half-dozen of his species, who would, any one individually, have thought their intellect woefully compromised by being brought into comparison with honest Tilly's. During his musical performance, I happened to ask Elphine why he was called Tilly. With her usual recklessness she answered me aloud, "Oh! do not you know his christian name is Matthew? and once upon a time an old Lady Richards came to Douglas to take the benefit of change of air, or to lose a bilious complaint, or some such trifle, and Tilly's brother the Colonel, whom you have not seen, as he is laid up with the gout—*à propos*,

Tilly, how is the worthy Colonel?—hem—where was I? Oh! well, the Colonel calling on her ladyship, spoke of a relative of his as *Matty*. A few days after, came an invitation from Lady Richards for the Colonel and his sister Matilda. There, my dear, I've given you a slight sketch of the origin; I am correct, Mr. Dalrymple, thereabout, am I not?"

"My good young lady, you are aware," attempted Tilly, but Miss Elphinstone frustrated his attempt.

"Come, Joanna, we must adjourn to our dressing-rooms—*au revoir*, Mr Dalrymple."

"Miss Elphinstone—but, my good young lady," said Tilly, as I was assisting Octavia from her sofa, "the Major—that is—I had an addition to the message I had the pleasure of giving you; I ought to have told you, I believe,

that Major Elphinstone commissioned me to burthen you with my company this evening."

"I am sure we are his debtors, Mr. Dalrymple," said Octavia kindly: "do help me across the gallery, and perhaps you will reconnoitre my birds for me, as I have so long been parted from them."—"Poor fellow," said she, when he left us, "I never saw him so much at a loss before; he has invited himself a thousand times,—what could be the reason? you look grave, Joan—tell me now, what crotchet you have got in your imagination?"

"Only that it is *possible* he might be hurt at your telling me in his hearing of his unfortunate cognomen."

"No such thing, my dear; he is never hurt—with *me* at least: no, it could not be that, I am sure."

But Octavia faltered a little, and though only a very little, I was glad to have shaken her inconsiderate habit, even a little.

CHAPTER XI.

DOUGLAS HEAD.

“The agreeable passions of love and joy can satisfy and support the heart without any auxiliary pleasure. The bitter and painful emotions of grief and resentment more strongly require the healing consolation of sympathy.”

Six o'clock brought Major Elphinstone and Sir Henry Howard, and two hours before Octavia would have thought that the fact of their arrival must certainly end all her suspense. Well, Sir Henry was arrived, but true to nature, Octavia's manner on receiving him

showed all the embarrassment and confusion which filled her mind. Such a reception might have flattered a man less prone to vanity than Sir Henry, but he happening to be a *very* vain man, was so delighted with it, that he could not refrain from showing his pleasure. Instantly aware of his inference, Octavia, still following the bent of impulse, suddenly chilled, and exhibited such a change in her demeanour, that any other than Sir Henry would have been thrown considerably aback, and led to indulge in sundry philosophical reflections on the changeableness of woman. The baronet, however, seldom troubled himself with searching into female motives;—a complete man of the world, he instantly placed even this caprice of manner to the same account, a preference for himself; and so fixed was his persuasion on this subject, that no possible manner of Miss Elphin-

stone's could have shaken it. At the moment, she was ignorant of this fact, and contenting herself with merely bestowing on him the bare dues of hospitality, she resolved to punish him by sharing between me and Mr. Dalrymple her smiles and notice.

Sir Henry was a great favourite with Major Elphinstone; they appeared to have similar tastes, occupations, and opinions: indeed, as far as hunting, shooting, and coursing went, the similarity might be real, but I suspected that Sir Henry did not always scruple to waive his own opinions for those of the Major. Octavia very well knew the estimation in which her father held Sir Henry, and she also suspected he meant him to be his son-in-law, but she was accustomed to indulge her own inclinations, and as her present inclinations by no means led to this issue, she suffered no fears

on this subject, but feeling too irritated much to address any questions to him on the subject of the tourists, she made her uncle a plea for non-appearance in the drawing-room, leaving me with strict injunctions to discover if Brooke Heneage were the bearer alluded to in Miss Brackenbury's note.

When the gentlemen joined me, I quickly perceived by Sir Henry's manner, that he had not omitted wine as an auxiliary to his spirits, and I determined that as soon as possible I would rejoin Octavia; first, however, I had my mission to fulfil, and perplexed by his demeanour, I perhaps deserved some excuse, if it were not completed to Elphine's satisfaction.

“When is Madge to return?” was her first inquiry.

I smiled at its indirectness, but was unable to

answer it, or indeed any of her questions; for Sir Henry had chosen to be entirely silent on the subject of the tourists. To none of my queries could I obtain a sensible reply, for with the wilfulness of wine, the more anxiety I showed, the more obstinate he became, and at last I was glad to escape from his company in the same ignorance in which I joined it. I had feared the effect this disappointment would have on Octavia's temper; but she surprised me by showing none of the impatience and vexation I had expected. "Tiresome creature!" was her only exclamation, and she instantly determined to persuade Major Elphinstone to accompany Sir Henry on the shooting expedition.

"It will be something to think of," said she; "and any sort of occupation just now is desirable. Joan, I could weep!" but she

did not. Contenting herself with one heavy sigh, she turned her thoughts to the little arrangements necessary for her father's journey, and the effect of this slight occupation fully justified my opinion of the usefulness of domestic economy in absorbing any restless feeling of the female temperament.

Dr. Johnson never wrote truer words than those he quoted of a lady, who said, "Men cannot hem a pocket handkerchief, so run mad." Many a fit of irritation is dissipated by the feminine employment, needle-work.

After the Major's departure, Octavia's spirits seemed more equable; she suffered herself to be persuaded to several little acts of exertion, and, as in most other attempts, the first was the worst. She resumed her music and her reading, and a lovely evening tempted her to a walk on the Head. There are not many spirits so

sunk, as not to be elevated by these walks : there are few that would not be soothed by the varied beauties, and interested by the sublime and contrasted prospects. To me it was ever a mine of inexhausted gratification, and whether I made one of a large party, or was accompanied only by the Major and Octavia, or wandered thither alone, the effect was always salutary. When in idle glee we clambered up the steep rocky acclivities, in a noisy party, I enjoyed the sudden changes in the landscape, and delighted in the quick succession of height on height, piled as if to tempt the young and vigorous to reach their summits. With the Major and Octavia, it was most pleasant to stand and view the surrounding scenery, which embraced a wide stretch of landscape, each varying, and each in turn claiming the preference. The Head commands a view of the ocean, which

alone is ever changing—ever new. This was Octavia's favourite view; however depressed or irritated in spirit, she would return from contemplating *it* calmed and soothed.

The Major's taste led him to prefer the more bustling scene of the town, the quay, and the bay, with Conisterre on its bosom. I, on the contrary, sought the woodland beauties, and turned to the brightly glowing foliage of the Grove, which, stretching below the Head, almost hid the low Nunnery from my search. Further to the right might be seen clusters of dark trees burying Kirk Braddon.

It was a pleasing idea that three persons of different tastes should stand on the same square yard, and each be able to feast their eyes on the view most congenial. We have thus stood some moments silently absorbed in our respective pleasures, till roused by the Major's

quiet remark, that “the Duchess was coming in,” or “the Duke was setting out,” meaning, thereby, the packets so named.

“My dear Joanna, how much I enjoy this walk, I always like a walk on the Head; but this evening my spirit feels unusually light—my health is, I believe, better, and my ankle stronger, and you are so good to me; or else, do you know, I rather prefer coming here alone! Yes, though papa is such a cheerful companion, I certainly have more enjoyment of the *mind* in wandering here ‘fancy free.’”

“But why so, my dear?”

“Oh! then I people it with beings perhaps created in my own fancy only, and I range these hills, accompanied by these imaginary personages; I hold conversations with them, maintain arguments, wax anxious on the subject, and suddenly awake by finding my progress

stopped sometimes by a shelving descent, sometimes by a group of real substantial promenaders !”

“ And what description of people are these imaginaries ? what are their marks, that I may know them, if we chance to meet ? ”

“ Eh ! ” said she, starting absently,—then, after a pause, “ yes, it is indeed enjoyment, to steal away from papa, on a still, delicious, glowing evening, to snatch up a bonnet and escape from the house while he thinks I am only seeking a needle, or a new shade of silk ; then away up the hill, and never look behind till I reach what Tilly Dalrymple calls the Fairies’ rocking stone,—then stop to catch my breath, and, looking behind, see dear papa emerging from the conservatory, having only that moment suspected my elopement, and then all too late,—he is distanced ; they would have fleet feet who

caught me. Perhaps, Joan, you can scarcely conceive the pleasure I have at the moment I catch papa's look of mingled surprise and disappointment !”

“ My dear Octavia, this is one of the points which I cannot esteem in you, and, in fact, which entirely puzzles me; *how* can it enter into your heart to conceive pleasure in paining those you love ?”

“ You give my thoughts a very strong expression, but perhaps you may be right—I believe you are right, and so stripped, it does seem unnatural : and yet, Joanna, it is very, very true. I have actually more than once stolen out of the room when papa was reading the newspaper, just when I supposed he had finished, and was about to say, “ And now, Octavia, would not a walk do us good ?” aye, and *you* know his kind look and manner, and

still! I have left him and taken pleasure in seeing him alone, disappointed at my desertion;—how can it be accounted for? I am not positively hard-hearted—I am distressed to see distress, and yet I could do so, and doat on my private walk, and, rambling on, could give my thoughts to fancied scenes and imaginary friends, not half so kind or so tender as that one dear father. Pray, Joanna, tell me how can these things be? I love my father as tenderly as most girls—when he is ill I grieve; but yet I can neglect him, and cruelly leave him at the very hour I know he likes to have me with him, and for what?—to yield to an engrossing, monopolizing spirit, that pants to be alone, merely to dwell on thoughts and wishes, as vain as they are selfish;—aye, now I have it! self is the root of my disease; do you know,” said she,

quickly changing from a low, choking, scarcely breathed articulation, to a tone of brisk interrogation, "Brooke Heneage once said he feared mine was a diseased mind. What could he mean? surely not a deranged mind?"

"No, certainly not; but how came he to say so? he seems not to have spared plain speaking with you. This is strange courtship, Octavia, if courtship it be."

She sighed and blushed painfully, as she said, "Ah! no courtship, but said in friendly good wishes, I dare say. I wish I remembered his good advice and plain speaking more than I do."

"And that is scarcely possible, Elphine; but come, the evening grows chilly, and the mist is gathering; besides, the ankle is failing, so let us go home."

I had gained the point I desired—I had

taught Octavia to probe her own heart, she had questioned it, and received a faithful answer. Self was the root of her disease, and surely to know her fault was the first step to a cure. The next day and the next, Elphine was enchanting; she was mild, patient, reasonable, —and on the third our friends returned.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SOIRÉE.

“ As onward we journey, how pleasant
To pause and inhabit awhile
Those few sunny spots like the present,
That 'mid the dull wilderness smile ;
But Time, like a pitiless master,
Cries “ onward,” and spurs the gay hours ;
And never does time travel faster
Than when his way lies among flowers.”

Who does not know the charm of a social evening spent in the company of those you love? Who cannot call to mind some *one* particular evening when, surrounded by happy

faces, and gladdened by bright smiles, the heart glowed with delight, and the eye flashed with joy? The very room, the furniture, but above all, that focus the hearth is ready at a moment to start before the memory and represent the scene as it occurred. The evening I would record still lives in my recollection—not perhaps in such vivid colouring as I should have given it the following morning, but even still more delightful, because every harshness, every rough line is blended with the predominant pleasure, and time and space have softened and shaded them so gently, that gradually the dark shades have grown softer and softer, till at last nothing has remained but the agreeable, and any little brusquerie is effaced and forgotten. The Major arrived to dinner, and while we still lingered in the dining-room questioning and being questioned in turn, Miss

Brackenbury and her two beaux walked up;— they were easily persuaded to spend the evening at Fort Anne, and good-natured Mr. Dalrymple too dropped in, so the muster in the drawing-room was not contemptible, for every one who has been to Douglas knows that beauty is doubly valuable in that mirrored drawing-room, pannelled throughout with plate glass. I accepted the Major's challenge to chess, and did not at first see how the young people applied themselves to seek amusement. After a few games (for I was so very a tyro, that the Major usually had the misery of conquering me thrice in half-an-hour) I was released, and joined the group seated round the table, where every one seemed happy; and it was happiness to us to be witnesses of theirs. Miss Brackenbury was seated near the table with a most demure look of pleasure beaming

on her countenance. She sat very still, watching Captain Heneage, who was busy cutting out her profile, which he had just taken on the wall. People always look better than usual or worse than usual, when they are sitting for a portrait, and though this of Madge's was only a silhouette on a sheet of letter-paper, she took care to look better than usual ; with her hands joined on her knees, and her head a little thrown back, she cast very complacent glances on Captain Heneage, who pursued his task with an earnestness which was very amusing to us, and apparently grateful to her.

Octavia was seated on an ottoman near the fire, and Brook Heneage, fixed near her, seemed to dwell upon her lovely conscious face—and that face, half hidden in its beautiful chevelure, literally appeared bathed in delight. In her

certainly of his affection, she appeared to feel a sort of fearful joy; there was fear in her furtive glance, yet joy was so predominant, that it imbued her with a bright loveliness that was indeed enchanting; her fond father glanced at me to remark it, she caught the glance and understood it. Springing up, she interrupted a most useful air in which Tilly Dalrymple was indulging, for the good soul had also been making his own happiness by betaking himself to the piano, and favouring the lovers with an agreeable accompaniment to their melodious breathings. Nobody values the utility of a loud piano-forte player more highly than a lover; ladies know that more agreeable things are said to them during a voluntary of this sort than in the stillness of a quiet room, and gentlemen venture to utter them under its cover, perhaps because they know they cannot be heard distinctly.

“My good Mr. Dalrymple, I must move you ; I am so happy, I want to sing—nothing is so delightful as singing when one is happy, except, perhaps,” said she, checking herself with a chastened look, “singing to one’s self when miserable !”

Brooke Heneage fortunately approached, and again Octavia’s face was lighted up with smiles.

“Do you know,” said he, “I have often wished I could play on this instrument.”

“This ?—the piano-forte ?—surely not.”

“Why should I not ?”

“Oh ! there is to me something so truly ridiculous in seeing a gentleman seated at a piano-forte ; imagine him placed at the mercy of a party of preluding quizzing young ladies, with no ribbons, or curls, or any thing to defend his back from their interesting remarks on its plainness.”

“Suppose, however, that he has not a plain back?”

“But it *must* look plain perched on a music-stool, his coat flaps hanging over it, and his tight sleeves sawing the air—how odious!—never dream of shining in that most ridiculous walk of singularity—you *could* only succeed in looking like a good music-master, and surely that would not be desirable.”

I watched the gentleman's face during this tirade with much interest: “if he give up,” thought I, “she is indeed secure of his affection, but he will not; at least, it is unlike his usual manner.”

“Then you prefer the flute: you would rather see a man handle the flute?” said he in an inquiring tone.

“No, I cannot say I am fond of seeing a man play the flute; *boys* I can only tolerate in

that line. It is but a childish toy in my eyes, and I never am accompanied by one but I feel uneasy—pained—for I cannot lose the idea that the performers distress themselves to produce their tones; and music should be a free-will offering—no pain, no labour should attach to it, or the pleasure is lost. The same applies to the harp; it is certainly a very elegant instrument, and a graceful woman looks more graceful seated before one; but the most thrilling sounds would not make me forget that to produce them she has blistered her fingers a dozen times, which may be at that actual moment so stained with sweet oil that they must be washed the moment she rises.”

The latter part of this speech was said in an expiatory tone, and particularly addressed to Mr. Heneage, who, standing behind her, met her eyes as she looked towards him, and

answered quietly, "Then, Mr. Dalrymple, nothing remains for you and me but the violin, according to this fastidious young lady's decision."

Octavia coloured with a tinge of vexation. She was instantly aware that her power did not usurp that of reason, and temper might, perhaps, have shaken what she did possess, if Captain Heneage had not that instant approached with his finished profile. It had the fate of most likenesses;—it was pronounced very like about the mouth, and very unlike near the nose by Major Elphinstone, at the same moment that Tilly Dalrymple declared he saw a strong resemblance of the nose, but none of the mouth;—and the very forehead Octavia would have known any where, Brooke Heneage looked at twice before he could discover the least resemblance. As he held it in his hand, pretending to be comparing it with

the original, who stood with much ease awaiting his scrutiny, Octavia caught his eye, and her smile made him restore it to his brother, with a ready acknowledgment that there was a likeness.

“Well, you have had your revenge, I hope,” said she.

He laughed, and, opening the *Irish Melodies*, they sang together, “Oh! breathe not his name,” and the notes rang through the room, and sunk into my heart. Mr. Dalrymple and I retired into separate corners of the room, to enjoy the felicity of quietly drinking in the sweet sounds. There was a short pause after this song, which was broken by Major Elphinstone’s comprehensive ejaculation, “Poor fellow!”—he had known Robert Emmett, on whom the song was written. It roused me; and I found that Tilly and I were objects of amusement to

Captain Heneage and Miss Brackenbury, who pointed out our sequestration to the company.

“ I am always melancholy when I hear sweet music,” said Mr. Dalrymple, coming forward with a smile of pleased complacency, which alone should have absolved him from a dozen follies.

“ There surely is nothing half so sweet in life,” whispered Captain Heneage to Miss Brackenbury, “ as singing duets with a person one loves.”

“ Except dancing with them,” replied she. He maintained a preference for singing, and the debate was referred to the musicians, who were busy seeking other duets, with an earnestness which implied that they at least thought *it* a delightful employment.

“ Which is preferable ?” said Brooke Heneage, slowly, and with his eyes fixed on the

carpet, "I cannot determine; Miss Fane, Miss Elphinstone, give your opinions."

"I cannot speak respecting dancing," said Octavia, precipitately; "I never danced with a person I liked in my life."

Instantly aware of the possible inference, her ingenuous face was covered with blushes, which it was vain to hide. Unmerciful Captain He-neage rallied her immediately, and, seizing her hands, drew her from the music stool to the mirrored wall, "to reflect back her blushes," as he tantalizingly declared.

Miss Brackenbury kindly talked of this mirrored wall, and as soon as possible engaged the Captain in an argument on the subject. He liked it above all things—would have his drawing-room pannelled in the same way, the moment he had one, and could afford it.

"Nonsense," said Madge, "pictures, good

pictures, are a thousand times to be preferred ; look at the sameness of these sheets of glass."

" There you are entirely mistaken, fair lady ; the sameness is in the picture, always the same—if it happen to be a lady in hat and feathers, 'tis always a hat and feathers ; if a gentleman in a bag wig, there you have the bag wig always ; but in my picture the lady may have a blue hat to-day, and a black one to-morrow. I myself may mount a sporting jacket in the morning, and a fantail at night Oh ! you are quite wrong ; I have all the busy moving life, yours would have only a dull, flat surface of sleep or death ; for you know the " sleeping and the dead are but as pictures." There, cap that ! you cannot, Madge. I bet you a pair of gloves you cannot tell me where that line is."

" In Shakspeare."

“ True, but where ? ”

“ The sleeping and the dead ”—hum, hum—
said she ;—“ be quiet—I am thinking—”

“ Do you give it up ? ”

“ Be still—no, to be sure not—stay, ’tis from
Othello.”

“ No such thing—I’ve won,—’tis in Mac-
beth.”

“ Oh ! but prove it. I cannot take your
assertion. I still think it is in Othello.”

“ Aye, because Desdemona *slept* and *died*,
I suppose. Fie, Madge, what a lame conclu-
sion.”

Shakspeare was asked for, and Octavia went
into the Octagon room to fetch the work.

She was absent some little time, and presently
we heard the sounds of her Æolian harp stealing,
as it were, across the gallery which separates
the drawing-room from the Octagon. In an in-

stant all were still. What so soon succeeds in imposing silence as sweet music? Octavia entered on tip-toe, as if she felt afraid to interrupt the harmony which gradually wound round the room, increasing every moment in power and pitch, till at last it gushed in a full burst of melody, perfectly astonishing. I listened breathlessly—there seemed a sort of spell thrown over us. I do not think any one could have endured that silence to be broken. After a sort of triumphant clash of sweetest sounds, the notes seemed to die away, as they had at first won upon us, gradually retreating, creeping stealthily round the pannels of the room. Twice there was a pause,—gently it breathed again—the most liquid notes hung quivering, trembling on the ear, which greedily caught them almost before they fell—again a pause—then one loud sweep, and all was still!

“ Perfectly magical,” cried Captain Heneage; “ but with your good leave, ladies, we will close the door. Æolian harps are delightful things; but one always catches cold after them. Brooke used to be a famous hand at constructing them— have you forgotten, Brooke, the harp you and I bungled for——”

“ Mr. Heneage made this,” interrupted Mr. Dalrymple, in an uncommonly quiet tone of voice.

How strange it is that though we may not observe the silence of one of a company, yet when that silence is broken, the omission is at once painfully evident. Miss Elphinstone and I looked at Mr. Dalrymple at the same moment, and the next at each other; it was plain something was wrong with him, for we both remembered in an instant that his voice had not been heard for the last hour.

“What in the world is the matter with him?” whispered Octavia to Mr. Heneage, who was writing something in pencil on a scrap of paper.

“Can you have forgotten what you said about his playing?” said he, reproachfully.

“*His* playing? *your* playing you mean.” Octavia’s tears rose to her eyes; “I only meant to teaze you, and I have offended *him*.”

“And you did not succeed in teasing me—it was an unlucky attempt,” said he smiling.

“Perhaps so,” said she, proudly, “but at least I will succeed in my next,” and in a moment she was by Mr. Dalrymple’s side.

“Will you be kind enough to go with me, and fetch the books I went for and did not bring, because the *Æolian* harp quite put them out of my head?”

With his constant forgiving manner, Mr.

Dalrymple accompanied her ;—they staid so long, that at last the Captain dispatched me and his brother to fetch at least the books, that he might win his wager. As he passed Miss Brackenbury, Brooke gave her the slip of paper, on which he had been scribbling. On entering the Octagon we found the two standing near the fire in earnest conversation. Octavia was saying, “ Indeed you must though—you may believe me.”

“ I cannot,” replied he, in a low voice, so low that Mr. Heneage and myself instinctively drew back as if we were intruding. Octavia’s next words, however, spoken in a clear voice, again induced us to remain.

“ I am reckless I know, Tilly, thoughtless and foolish—foolish certainly, to be making this confession of my thoughtlessness ; but there is not another man to whom I could confess half

as much—but I never meant to hurt you, and as a proof of it I will own——.”

To save any more confessions, we entered, and Miss Elphinstone, instantly recovering from confusion, (if she felt any,) continued, “ I will own there are but two classes of friends in my catalogue—those worth quarrelling with, and those not worth it.”

“ And I am worthy to be in the first class?” said Tilly, delighted.

Mr. Heneage laughed, and desired Octavia to keep a place for him in the second rank, as he never wished to be placed in the first.

“ According to my theory, that is no compliment to yourself.”

“ Perhaps not; but resolve your theory to practice before you class me, and let it not be to-night, I beseech you: you look at this moment too” * * * * *

Alas ! I know not what he said, for they each took up some volumes of Shakspeare, and what, or how she looked was whispered in the gallery !

CHAPTER XIII.

SHAKSPEARIANA.

“ Hear him but reason in divinity,
And all admiring, with an inward wish,
You would desire (the poet) were a prelate ;
Hear him debate of commonwealth affairs,
You’d say it hath been all-in-all his study ;
List his discourse of war, and you shall hear
A fearful battle rendered you in music ;
Turn him to any cause of policy,
The Gordian knot of it he will unloose,
Familiar as his garter.”

SHAKSPEARE.

“ HERE is Shakspeare, cousin Madge,” said
Mr. Heneage, “ now let me help you to win
your wager.”

“ Tell me not of Shakspeare or of wagers,” replied the lady, in a most heroic tone, “ I hold in my hand something infinitely more interesting—listen, ladies, gallants all—hem, hem!— ‘ Conversation held in the mirrored drawing-room, at Forte Anne, September 22nd.’

‘ My room, instead of looking glass,
Paintings,’ said Madge, a lovely lass,

‘ Upon its walls shall wear.’

‘ Absurd,’ cried Brooke, ‘ for how, alas !

Could paintings rival or surpass

The charmed reflection, where the glass

Would your own image bear ? ’ ” *

“ Excellent ! excellent ! ” cried every one.

“ Why, Captain, you really are a very pretty poet,” said Mr. Dalrymple.

“ Much obliged, Sare,” said the Captain, bowing first, and twirling his whiskers afterwards, “ we flatter ourselves we are pretty well ;

* Transcribed from the manuscript of a lost friend.

but I sigh to say the lines under admiration are not mine—they are the offspring of my grave brother, who flatters by stealth, and will blush (are you ready, Brooke?) to find it known.”

“Alas! my blushing days are over,” said Mr. Heneage, “if, indeed, they ever existed; but why are those ladies’ heads clustering so together? there is mischief, Mr. Dalrymple, I am convinced, so let us crush it, or help it.”

“Stay a moment,” said Mr. Dalrymple, in a low voice, “do not disturb them; you cannot tell what pleasure it is to me to watch those clustered heads,—there is surely nothing so attractive in women as beautiful hair.”

“Well, you are not far wrong, Sir,” replied Brooke, smiling indulgently at Tilly’s simplicity, “and I agree with you in paying the full toll of admiration to these particular three;

but help me to decide which is most beautiful."

" 'Tis an unthankful office," said Tilly, "and I have no great mind to undertake it; but what say you to Miss Brackenbury's shining black locks?" and he looked curiously in Mr. Heeneage's face. Brooke laughed at the peering action, and anxious curiosity of his inquirer.

" Yes, Madge's hair is very beautiful; I like those masses into which she heaps it, for it is very becoming to her joyous face. Then there is such a distinction in the character of the three heads,—Miss Fane's so closely braided, so classical, not a stray lock to break the beautiful outline,—I almost think we must give the preference to her fair hair and Grecian head."

" But Miss Elphinstone's?" said Mr. Dalrymple.

“ Well, Miss Elphinstone’s ; ” replied Mr. Heneage, and he paused, as he fixed his eyes on it in unrestrained admiration, “ ’tis certainly a lovely colour, so warm and sunny ; such thorough English brown, and the clustering ringlets, too, are charming. One would wonder how so much could belong to so small a head—see how redundant it is ! positively I believe it is false : observe how long it hangs on her neck—rest assured, Sir, tis borrowed.”

“ You are entirely mistaken, Mr. Heneage,” said Mr. Dalrymple, warmly, “ I shall rest assured of no such absurdity ; I have known Elphine—Miss Elphinstone too long to credit such a suspicion ; ” and Tilly sighed as he concluded.

“ Oh ! I may be mistaken,” answered Mr. Heneage, smiling ; “ but you are, perhaps, little aware to what an extent that sort of

thing is carried now-a-days. My cousin's, for instance, which I have been admiring, looks so perfectly natural, that you will not easily believe it is not all her own ; but you shall see her acknowledge the fraud ;" then going up to Miss Brackenbury, he said abruptly, " Madge, do not you wear false hair ? "

" What an absurd question ! I positively will decline answering it."

" There, Sir, you find she cannot deny the fact."

" Nonsense, Brooke, you know I do not : what can have put such a preposterous notion into your head ? "

" The simple assurance of the fact. Yesterday I should have defended you most jealously on such a score ; but this morning I was painfully assured of the alarming cir-

cumstance;" and he fixed his eyes on a locket which Miss Brackenbury wore.

The young lady laughed a little, and blushed a little; but quickly diverted his attention by holding up an album, into which she had been, at my request, copying his epigram.

"Look, is this copied correctly? I really think it was very ill-mannered of me to copy these lines for you, Joanna. I ought positively to have refused, and the author, as in duty bound, would then have given them double value by the ornaments of his slender calligraphy. By the way, cousin Brooke, I advise you to change your hand-writing, and leave off rhyming forthwith; for every young lady will tax you if you coin such pretty speeches, and write them so delicately. Well, will it do?"

“ No, you have not copied correctly ; but that is a sin of which you ladies are always guilty. I never knew a lady in my life who copied correctly : she always adds *very* or *most*, or some such superlative expression, that quite destroys the simplicity of the sense.”

“ And pray have I added *very* or *most* to these said lines ? ”

“ Neither, fair lady,” said Brooke, “ your amendment shows far more quickness, naïveté and delicacy than the best epigram ever written.”

What could the alteration be ?

She had written *lively* instead of *lovely*.

“ Oh ! come hither, come hither, and receive conviction,” cried Captain Heneage.—Macbeth, Act II. scene 2nd. As it happens with most people, I began with the last volume, and looked backwards, and positively did not stumble on

Macbeth till the very last,—come, Madge, you have fairly lost—confess.”

“ Granted, Sir ; and to-morrow I’ll fairly pay ! but just now I want to look at Miss Fane’s album. Oh ! Octavia, where is your album ? I have not seen it yet.”

“ I have not one :—I never had the album mania.”

“ No ! why how is that ?”

“ I cannot say exactly ; it was partly indolence, and partly want of taste, and partly pride perhaps. I did not like the idea of asking people to ‘contribute,’ as it is called in album phraseology, for, fifty to one, the person who *will* write in your album is not able, and those who *can* are unwilling ; and the vexation of being refused is annoying, I should think. Then I am not one to be content with filling three parts of it myself. I should wish mine

to be a *bonâ fide* album, if I did establish such an article;—nothing should be admitted that was not genuine and original.”

“That is my opinion of albums,” said Brooke Heneage. “I would have young ladies keep to the spirit of the word, and then there would be some interest in the perusal of a few rare contributions; but now-a-days the albums put into your hands are crammed full of long, senseless rhymes in which you would never find point or meaning, if you ventured the attempt. The very cross corners of some are occupied with stale enigmas and mots from Joe Miller.”

“All very fine, Mr. Heneage,” said Miss Brackenbury, “but it is very pleasant to look into one’s album for all that,” and she turned over the leaves with a smile of easy satisfaction. “Now see, here are some sweet lines; they were written by Catherine Mavor the day be-

fore she sailed for India." He looked over her shoulder, and read—

"Rose-leaf, star, and dew,
Monuments of mind."

"My dear Madge, what absurdity ! not a line or word in connexion. 'Monuments of mind !' Pshaw ! they are lines picked out of different poems and joined together, in my opinion. What do you say, Miss Fane ? You are certainly giving the subject deep attention."

"I was thinking of poor Caroline Mavor," said I, "and her Indian voyage. Then I thought of the last evening I saw her—she was indulging a favourite fancy of hers, likening all her schoolfellows to Shakspeare's heroines. I know Laura Flintham was Ophelia, and you, Madge, were Anne Page."

"Oh ! much too large for Anne Page," cried Captain Heneage. "No, Madge is a very pretty

Catherine—I could just imagine Catherine with such a shape, and head, and eyes ; aye, Madge, you have the very Catherine step,” continued he, as she crossed the room.

“ Oh ! kind Petruchio, pray cease to criticise my poor eyes and hair, and employ your wit by helping me to find a character for Miss Fane,” returned Miss Brackenbury going towards Elphine and Mr. Brooke Heneage, who were busy in idleness.

“ No, Madge,” said the latter, “ join us ; Miss Elphinstone has invented the prettiest pastime possible ; we were talking of the *Sortes Virgilianæ*, and she proposed we should try the *Sortes Shakspearianæ* ; what say you ? dare you run the chance of drawing the one eel from the basket of vipers ? ”

“ Oh ! ’tis a happy thought, and just like Elphine. I always say she is the personification

of poetry. I remember at school she was the only one who found out the "sortes" Charles and Falkland drew. Begin with Major Elphinstone. Heh ! my good Sir, you are asleep, and dreaming, I dare say, of putting me in check the third move. Wake, Sir, and try your fate."

"*En prise*, my dear," said the Major, catching each hand prisoner, as he roused himself from a dose into which the Æolian harp had lulled him.

"But, Octavia, you should have a pocket edition of Shakspeare ; these separate volumes will not be a fair trial."

"I have not one ; but you, Mr. Dalrymple, I know, always carry one."

Tilly blushed a little, as he produced the work bound in delicate white leather.

"I know what the Major *should* hit on,"

whispered Captain Heneage,—“ the passage in
' As you like it,' beginning,

‘ Oh ! good old man, how well in thee appears
The constant service of the antique world,’ &c.”

He opened, however, in,

“ Ladies, a general welcome from his Grace
Salutes ye all. This night he dedicates
To fair content and you. None here, he hopes,
In all this noble bevy has brought with her
One care abroad ; he would have all as merry
As first good company, good wine, good welcome,
Can make good people !” *Henry VIII.*

“ Very good,” cried Captain Heneage, “ all
good ! By your leave this lady shall try her
fate next. Come, Miss Elphinstone.”

Octavia hesitated a moment, and then precipitately opened the book. Her finger fell on—

“ And, being a woman, I will not be slack
To play my part in fortune’s pageant.”

Second Part of Henry VI.

“ Very good ! excellent ! ” was again the cry as the Captain himself dipped—“ Ha ! ha ! better still ! ”

“ Oh ! coz, coz, my pretty little coz, that thou didst know how many fathoms deep I am in love, but it cannot be sounded. My affection hath an unknown bottom, like the Bay of Portugal.”

“ Listen, Madge, the very book speaks ; and women always believe what is in print. Will you ever doubt again, heretic ? ”

“ Pshaw ! I’ll have my revenge on you for that,” interrupted Miss Brackenbury, “ let me fish for the eel : but truly there are as many eels as vipers in Shakspeare—one can hardly hit on any thing *mal-à-propos*. But stay, Mr. Dalrymple, pray tempt your fate first.”

Tilly’s was most comically sublime :—

“ His life was gentle, and the elements
So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, This was a man.”

Julius Cæsar.

“ Now then, Madge.”

“ No, no;—there are Miss Fane and your brother.”

“ Come, then, Brooke :—dip, man, dip quickly. Oh ! you won’t ? Here, then, for you. I will be proxy. Ha ! most exquisite !—

‘ In peace there’s nothing so becomes a man

As modest stillness and humility.’ *Henry V.*

What say you to that ? I expect Miss Fane will appoint me proxy in her case, I’ve hit your *humble* self so exactly to the life.”

“ Say rather, bold warrior, it is your own case, and your own picture by contraries. Go on to the next lines, and you will find that you are in peace what you ought to be in war, so no doubt the reverse is completed.”

“ Slander, rank slander. Now, Miss Fane.”

I took the volume, and also hit upon some lines in “ As you like it :”—

“ You are full of pretty answers ; have you not been acquainted with goldsmiths’ wives, and conned them out of rings ? ”

“ How strangely applicable ! ” said one and all.

“ Now, Madge, last, not least, the book of fate is left to you.”

“ And my revenge,” said she. “ And I think ‘ As you like it ’ has produced the best answers, so there I’ll fish. Now aid me, revenge, and chance, which has helped ye all—last, but best—listen, listen !—

‘ There is none of my uncle’s marks upon you. He taught me to know a man in love, in which cage of rushes I am sure you are not a prisoner.’ ”

“ What were his marks ? ”

read Captain Heneage, looking over her shoulder.

“ A lean cheek, which you have not—a blue eye and sunken, which you have not—an unquestionable spirit, which you have not—a beard neglected, which you have not ; but I pardon you for that : for simply your having in beard is a

younger brother's revenue ;—then your hose should be ungartered, your bonnet unbanded, your sleeves unbuttoned, your shoes untied, and every thing about you demonstrating a careless desolation ;—but you are no such man, you are rather point device in your accoutrements, as loving yourself than seeming the lover of any other.”

There my worthy cousin ! I hope you are silenced, the very book speaks against you.”

“ Go on, go on, a little farther, and you will see it speaks *for* me, or my memory deceives me.”

“ No, no, we will let well alone, for I have fairly silenced you.”

“ Let me propose something for your speculation,” said the Major ; “ tell me what profession Shakspeare was ? Do you notice how wonderfully and universally correct he is in his descriptions of every profession ? I have heard it said, that from his accurate descriptions of the human frame, you would suppose he had applied himself to study anatomy.”

“If,” interrupted Captain Heneage, “the thorough knowledge he displays of a military life, did not make us ready to dub him soldier.”

“Then his intimate acquaintance with law,”—said Octavia; “surely nothing can be clearer than his detection of its intricacies. I am of opinion he was a lawyer, and instance Portia, and his frequent use of legal terms.”

“And again, you might suppose him a sailor, when you read the *Tempest*,” said I.

“In short, Major, you are perfectly right,” said Mr. Heneage, “the idea is quite correct, and I believe, most men will own, when reading Shakspeare, that the intimate knowledge he displays of their own profession justifies the suspicion that their identical calling was his.”

A short pause which ensued after these words allowed our agreeable visitors time to

remember the hour, and astonished to find it so late, they took their leave.

Major Elphinstone, tired with his journey, bade us good night immediately on their departure; and Octavia, throwing herself on the low ottoman she had occupied the early part of the evening, tossed up her arms in unrepressed delight—"My dearest Joanna,—my best friend—congratulate me; I am the happiest creature existing."

"My dear girl, I do indeed congratulate you, if he has"—

"*If*—oh, no cold ifs this night," said she impetuously; "he has not *proposed* to me according to established phraseology, but—but"—and overcome by real feeling she hid her face in her hands.

"But what, dearest Elphine? tell me, will you not?"

After a long pause she exclaimed, "Oh ! I am so *certain* of being happy."

"Then Heaven bless you, dear girl, and make you so !"

I cordially embraced her, and perhaps, few friends could sympathize more truly or more tenderly than I did in her anticipations of happiness.

"I will not question you, Octavia—I do not even wish to know what has passed, only do not deceive yourself—surely you *are* certain ?"

"Oh ! certain—certain ! never did creature—*never* did creature rely so certainly on the honour of man," she cried enthusiastically ; "but you are so suspicious, so cautious, Joanna—oh ! I would not be chilled by your feelings for the world !"

"Fearful, you should say Octavia ; I own I do feel fearful lest you should be buoyed with

hope and doomed to suffer disappointment—it would be overwhelming to *you* I know.”

“Dreadful!” said she, shrinking; “do not, Joanna, do not, I entreat, shock me with the thought,—disappointment *now* would destroy me!”

“Hush, hush, Octavia!”

“I speak seriously,” said she, her face burning with intense feeling, “I feel positively persuaded, that if any occurrence should separate us, my doom is sealed;—but away with such fears; I shall see him to-morrow—to-morrow he will be in this house, in this room: oh! can I be sufficiently thankful for my happiness?” And totally exhausted, she burst into tears—natural tears. I soothed her agitated spirits, and having been inclined during the evening to believe Mr. Heneage had at last come to a determination to propose to her, I

could the more conscientiously minister the only cordial her overwrought mind would receive.

“You will be sufficiently thankful, rest assured—nay you are—these tears show it—remember them, dearest Elphine, remember these tears in your future hours of glee, of triumph, of recklessness.”

“I will—I will,” she sobbed, “I can never forget this evening, nor this hour,” and she cast her eyes round the room, as if to minute every article of furniture in her memory; “there we tried the Sortes—at that table he wrote the epigram—on this very ottoman I sat while you and papa had your game of chess”—

“And the epigram, Octavia, are you not a little jealous of Madge, eh?”

“Not in the least,” said she, proudly;

“no, this night, ’tis not possible to admit jealousy for a moment—dear Madge! how she will rejoice at my happiness—dear, dear Joanna, is not my joy too great to last?” And truly my heart sunk as she asked the question: but the next morning Mr. Heneage called, and his presence dispelled every doubt from my mind.

CHAPTER XIV.

GOOD RESOLUTIONS.

“Tout qui brille est sur son declin.”

AND now Miss Elphinstone had gained her wishes; Brooke Heneage had proposed for her, to her delight, and her father's surprise, for the Major had always taken it for granted that she was to marry Sir Henry Howard; and like most people whose thoughts and expectations are fixed on any one particular object, his eyes were blinded to all other pros-

pects. Octavia, however, had nothing to complain of in her father's manner of giving his consent; there was not a shadow of coldness, unless surprise had induced a chill—the Major certainly was surprised, and showed it, but a few days sufficed to reconcile his feelings to his daughter's arrangement for her happiness; and as Sir Henry was absent in the south of the island, there seemed not one dissentient feeling.

Behold, then, Octavia happy!—happy? could she be otherwise? engaged to the man she had long preferred, a man suitable in age, tastes, and station;—sufficiently older to command her respect; sufficiently prepossessing in appearance and manner to ensure her affection; at least his qualities had won for him the respect and esteem of the world, and women are always influenced by the opinion of the many. A few words that passed between Major and

Miss Elphinstone, will show what cause there was for my doubting the fact of her happiness.

The evening of the day on which my mind was set at rest by Mr. Heneage's overture, we spent in the Octagon-room. Major Elphinstone lingered longer than his usual custom, and at length, on our proposing to bid him good night, he drew his daughter to his side, and said, "Octavia, my only child, are you happy?"

"Dearest father, can you doubt it? Is not Mr. Heneage every thing you could wish to see in—in—a son?"

"My love, when Mr. Heneage told me this morning that he had gained your consent, I was astonished, because I had not thought it probable—but the very mention of your consent secured mine: still, now that a few

hours have passed, my feelings return to what they were before I saw Mr. Heneage, and I cannot rest till I have asked you whether he has your entire undivided preference. ‘Night is a wise counsellor,’ therefore, consult your pillow; do not answer me now, for to do so would not be acting justly to any of the parties whose welfare I have at heart. Mr. Heneage has just quitted you, therefore I cannot expect a totally uninfluenced reply; think of my question, my child, and tell me to-morrow,” continued he in a whisper, “whether I had not *once* reason for believing you would be a Howard?”

Octavia’s face sank on her father’s shoulder, covered with blushes. There was a pause. “I will answer you to-night, father,” at length, said she, in a hurried, though determined manner; “to-night and always, believe me, Mr.

Heneage will possess my whole and entire preference. He deserves it, he has asked it, and by that he merits no little gratitude from me; for I feel most deeply his superiority;—yes, father, superiority—not perhaps of rank or fortune, but certainly of character. *You* have looked over my faults because they were *mine*, but would Sir Henry Howard? Would *he* make allowance for my waywardness, my humours—for indeed, dear father, they *are* humours. No, no, his temper and mine would never suit;”—she checked herself; “but will it suit with Mr. Heneage?” she glanced at me inquiringly. “But I *will* crush them—oh! father, what a task you have left for him and me!”

Major Elphinstone started at this deep reproof, and Octavia, true to her character, burst into tears of self-blame; “forgive me, forgive me, father, *dearest* father?” But her father was

shocked, and did not instantly answer her. She, however, intreated his forgiveness so earnestly that he could not but grant it, yet it struck me he was deeply grieved by her random expression.

“My dear child, I do forgive you; calm yourself; but, Octavia, how came you to strike the only chord that could have grieved me,—and *this* night too,—nay, no more tears, did you not say five minutes ago, how can I be otherwise than happy?”

And such was the end of the first day of Miss Elphinstone's *certainty* of happiness! she was absolutely miserable, for no feeling is so difficult to be forgotten as self-reproach.

The next day, and the next, were, however, ample compensation for her transient miseries, and Octavia *did* forget her self-reproaches and the cause of them. She lived alone to *self*, and so did Mr. Heneage, apparently; he was cer-

tainly much attached to her, and not in the least ashamed to manifest his attachment, for it has been truly said, that a sensible man may love like a madman, though not like a fool; and although he perhaps did not quite deserve either character, he did ample justice, in my opinion, to the name of lover, and for some days Octavia too was satisfied;—is not *that* saying enough? I can give no account of divers walks and drives which just now took place; I seemed all at once to have found the leisure I had so long wished for, and was very busy sketching, and consequently could not join in them, but Captain Heneage and Miss Brackenbury usually set out with them, and if the two parties sometimes happened to part company on the road, I dare say it was by tacit consent of all four. I know dinner was often kept waiting, and nobody found it out;

for if the Major looked at his watch, it was only to say, "What a charming day ! how Octavia will enjoy her ride !" or "the clouds hang low, it is well you did not go with those wanderers, Miss Fane, they are sure to be caught in a shower.—Ah ! here they come !"

But this could not last. The whole party from Cumberland began to think it was time to return home, and for one week they contented themselves with saying they thought so, but when that was past Mrs. Heneage actually said she must go ;—she was expecting an old friend to visit her at Haverholm, and it was absolutely necessary she should be at home to receive her. Of course Miss Brackenbury would accompany her, and I naturally anticipated the gentlemen would not allow the ladies to travel without them. Not so, however, Miss Elphinstone ; it seems the idea had never oc-

curred to her, and unfortunately the first hint she received was one morning at Lady Henry Murray's. Captain Heneage had brought down his stock of shooting gloves, which we found the young ladies engaged in repairing.

"I am glad you are come," said Madge, "if only to interrupt the long histories we have had concerning these gloves."

"But I have not yet finished," said Captain Heneage, "and I know Miss Elphinstone will like to know that though Brooke used to be a bad shot he has mended lately ;"—then running on without pity for Elphine's heightened colour, "I lent him this old pair to put his hand in, and positively, this season he has brought home his one-and-a-half brace with ease."

Miss Elphinstone crossed the room to speak to Miss Henriana Murray, who was hanging up some prints.

“I am wondering,” said Miss Brackenbury, “which of you two is the taller.”

“Miss Henriana,” said Captain Heneage.

“I think Miss Elphinstone,” said Mr. Heneage, measuring them with his eye.

“It is soon decided,” cried Henriana, stepping off the chair on which she was standing.

“Ah! why do you sit down? mamma wants to see how tall you are.”

“Well, and I sit down because I always look taller sitting,” said she playfully; “but let me have the credit, Henriana; *you* have a chance of growing, I have none.”

“There is very little of her,” said Mrs. Heneage, looking proudly at Brooke, “but it is all life.”

“Oh! Miss Elphinstone is tall enough, is she not Madge?” inquired Captain Heneage, “you know—

‘ Man wants but little here below,
Nor wants that little long.’

I admire littleness ;” and he glanced at Miss Brackenbury, who smiled and went on sewing his gloves, as if she had received a compliment.

“ Ah ! you will not vex Madge,” said Mrs. Heneage kindly, “ she is not easily teased, as you may see by her person ; indeed, my dear, ’tis time we left Douglas, you will really become *too* stout.”

“ I believe I have grown stouter,” replied Miss Brackenbury, “ but I will be weighed when we return to Haverholm—I was weighed the day before we came, do not you remember, Brooke ?”

Brooke nodded assent, and they smiled as if some pleasant recollection crossed the mind of each. Strange that *that* smile should create so much speculation in Octavia’s mind ! Though

she had reason to believe her friend was engaged to Captain Heneage, and she knew herself sure of his brother's affections, yet she was uneasy. Not so Captain Heneage;—"Ah! by the way, I was not of that same weighing party. Where was I? Oh! gone over to Welby's—weighing parties are always merry. Pray, Lady Henry, is there not such a thing as a pair of scales to be found in Douglas? What hinders us from being weighed this morning? I'll wager that Miss Elphinstone is lighter than Miss Henriana—taller or not."

"I think she is," said Lady Henry Murray, looking fondly at her daughter, "but that may soon be proved; what say you, Mrs. Heneage, to a walk to Mr. Pell's warehouse? I am sure he will be glad to see the young people, and I know you want the next volume from Jefferson's."

Mrs. Heneage smiled, and at her smile all the glove menders tossed away their work and prepared for a walk.

While they were absent, Captain Heneage said, "Have you written that letter yet, Brooke?"

"No, it will do to-morrow, will it not?"

"Why, it *will*, but when a thing is settled, why delay? You know very well, that Welby means to have a host of folks at this same *battû*, and they will want summoning from the north and the south, so why not write at once?"

Brooke caught Octavia's anxiously inquiring look—she did not speak, nor did he. To relieve her I inquired when Captain Heneage meant to be in Cumberland?

"Why, we must be at home on the 30th, and this is the 22nd."

"The 30th!" Octavia gasped, rather than

spoke—"on the 30th you *came*." And in a moment the panorama of the month passed across her mind. Brooke approached her and spoke in a low voice,—she did not answer : again he spoke.

"Did she not know we were going so soon?" whispered Captain Heneage to me. "I thought my mother told her on Tuesday when she called at Fort Anne, to do the proper—what a pity I was so incautious, it would have come better from Brooke."

But it did not seem to come well from Brooke, at least Octavia did not take it well ; she was panic-struck, and unfortunately showed it.

"It is very flattering," again whispered Captain Heneage to me.

I almost wished she heard him, to check the exhibition of the feeling she was indulging.

The ladies came down stairs, equipped for their walk, and we set out.

“ We shall look like a wedding,” said Henriana Murray, who was a nice cheerful girl of fifteen ; and immediately, as if the idea gave pleasure to Mr. Heneage, he gave one arm to me, as he drew Octavia’s through the other ; but she did not seem to be associating feelings, for she said, drawing down her veil, “ How distasteful is this sun ! ”

“ Ah ! Octavia,” said I, “ beware of fickleness.”

“ Why ? ” asked she, quickly.

“ Do you not remember, as we passed this very house, you looked up cheerfully, and said, ‘ How delightful is this sun ! how *congratulating* it seems ! ’ ”

Octavia sighed, and Mr. Heneage inquired what had changed her feelings in so short a time.

“ I cannot tell,” said she, “ but I feel unhappy.”

“ My dear Miss Elphinstone, why make yourself and other people uncomfortable about what you are ashamed even to speak? surely you are not thus unhinged because we are going on the 30th?”

“ Not because you are going, perhaps, said she, “ but why did not *you* tell me—why leave it for Captain Heneage to name? Madge knew—every one knew but myself.”

“ Even *I* did not know, and do not know,” said Mr. Heneage; “ you happened to hear this morning the most conclusive conversation that has passed on the subject. I am not aware that my mother has made up her mind—she had not done so yesterday. Charles, you hear, has determined to be at Mr. Welby’s *battú*, and if so, we must settle something soon;

but why distress yourself, Octavia? I shall not doubt *you*," added he, kindly, " why, then hurt me by showing this uneasiness?" for Octavia's tears were by this time falling fast, though we were walking in the crowded street. Poor girl! she had yet to learn to check her feelings and conquer impulse; it was a lesson that took her years in the learning.

CHAPTER XV.

BLUNDERS.

“ Notre cœur est un instrument incomplet ; une lyre où il manque des cordes, et où nous sommes forcés de rendre les accens de la joie sur le ton consacré aux soupirs.”

WE were now near Mr. Pell's, and the party in advance waited for us before they entered. Mr. Heneage, to conceal Octavia's nervousness, relinquished my arm, as we joined Lady Henry, and said to his mother, “ Miss Elphinstone and I will go on to Jefferson's for your book : I want some letter-paper.”

Immediately on their leaving us, Sir Henry

Howard and Mr. Dalrymple appeared coming from the other end of the street—of course they joined us, and forthwith we entered Mr. Pell's warehouse.

The good man was extremely flattered by the visit, of which he had to do all the honours; for it so chanced we had fixed on his workmen's dinner-hour, and he was alone in the warehouse.

“ Well, Sir Henry, when did you return ? ” said Lady Henry Murray, “ I understood you meant to visit Ireland before we should see you again.”

“ Oh ! my dear madam, do not call me to account for my *past* intentions, I entreat ; I never can afford to answer for more than those of the present hour, which are generally pretty numerous.”

“ Ah ! I hope they are all honest, and then

no matter how many you have," replied her ladyship with simplicity.

"Madge, how many intentions have you at this moment?" inquired Captain Heneage.

"Dear, dear, I do not know—I mean to be weighed, and I mean to weigh more than Miss Fane, and I mean to weigh more than I did at Haverholm, and I mean——"

"Stop, my good lady, three meanings are quite sufficient for the present moment, do not you think so, Miss Murray? Now then, to fulfil the first—where are your holiday scales, Mr. Pell? of course you have a superfine pair, for weighing light articles—aye, those are they; now, Madge, take care of hats and feathers, and flowers."

But, unfortunate! all the weights were not in their places, and good Mr. Pell hunted and searched every hole, and corner, and cranny;

but the tiresome one pound and two pound were wanting, and it was in vain that the gentlemen changed and combined, and tried the different weights—all would not do.—How was Mr. Pell to manage? If the ladies would be so very kind as to wait, he would run home—he knew how it was, he remembered they were taken to the house the day before yesterday; but they ought to have been brought back. He would not detain the ladies long—not above ten minutes. But this the ladies could not agree to, therefore obliging Mr. Dalrymple offered, and was allowed to run up to Mr. Pell's house, and to desire that the wanted weights might be sent down.

Mr. Pell, highly delighted with his morning's visitors, showed all his curiosities with pride and pleasure. Among others, he produced what Henriana called a wonderful mirror, which

reflected the most villainous change in the human face divine; if you looked one way it frightened you by presenting the *broadest* face you can imagine, the eye-balls strained, the nostrils distended, cheeks stretched out, and mouth!—oh! what a mouth it made for Captain Heneage! Then, taking it longitudinally made, as Mr. Pell said, “all the difference:” for truly you could not know yourself, such a dreadful long face did it pull in a moment; the most obstinate pug nose was instantly stretched to the length of a quarter of a yard. Even Miss Brackenbury’s round chin, whose dimples might almost defy age itself, elongated till it looked like the Witch of Endor’s,—and the hideous cheeks! We all preferred viewing ourselves *latitudinally*, for ugly as that showed us to be, it was lovely compared with the long faces we pulled. Yet will it be

believed, every one of the party, young and old, looked in this mirror—Satan's own, as Captain Heneage called it, for disarranging the regularity of his favourite, Madge. Probably each one thought, "I never can look so plain as they do:" if so, all were disappointed, for nature was obliged to own we *did* look downright ugly, and the most provoking part of the affair was, that the *likeness* was never entirely lost; with all the stretching and pulling, we could always know ourselves and acknowledge our deformity.

Mr. Heneage and Miss Elphinstone returned before Mr. Dalrymple. Sir Henry went up to Octavia, and shook hands with her in a manner that I did not much admire; it seemed rather—(perhaps I was fastidious)—but I fancied it to imply a very slight *threatening* manner. Miss Elphin-

stone's pride seldom was wanting; it enabled her, on this occasion, to return his salutation with the ease due to herself; but there was a seeming determination *not* to avoid his eye, which I did not like, nor did he, I fancied.

There seemed a constraint thrown over us on the entrance of Mr. Heneage and Miss Elphinstone, which perhaps the former observed; for he immediately inquired why we were not weighing. The difficulty was explained; but he could not rest without trying some one, and persuaded me to be put into the scales.

He was more fortunate in his combinations than we had been; for he contrived to make out my exact weight, which encouraged Miss Brackenbury to try once more, and by some means or other they summed up her weight.

“Eight stone two pounds, Madge—very bad weight,” said Captain Heneage, gaily lifting her out.

“ Oh ! here is Tilly Dalrymple coming, and Mr. Pell’s man following,” said Sir Henry. “ Now, Captain Heneage, I’ll wager a bottle we trick Tilly into a bet, if these ladies will hold their peace, and not say they have been weighed.”

“ Very well ; but quickly name your conditions—quick, quick.”

“ Oh ! we lay an off-hand bet which comes nearest Miss ——” He glanced at me, but perhaps he had not forgotten the circumstances under which we had last met ; at all events, he passed me by and said, “ Miss Brackenbury’s weight : she was eight stone two pounds. Suppose you guess a pound under, I’ll take a pound over, and you, Mr. Heneage—”

“ Oh ! pray leave me out, I really will not be a party in your cheating.”

Good-natured Tilly arrived, and received

the clamorous thanks of the party ; particularly those of Lady Henry, who had not heard the betting scheme, and of her youngest daughter Henriana, who enjoyed the jest extremely. To make the thing more natural, the Miss Murrays were first weighed, then Miss Elphinstone.

“ Ah !” whispered Captain Heneage, as he helped his brother to place her in the scales, “ you are heavier than you were an hour ago, Octavia.”

The kind manner of addressing her by name soothed Elphine’s spirits, and she smiled gratefully ; even condescending to reply, in his own peculiar manner, “ I am a *ponderous* load, truly.”

“ Now then, Madge. Eh ! Madge, I dare bet on your weight within a pound,” cried Captain Heneage.

“ Well *what* dare you bet ?” said Sir Henry, taking the cue, “ always presuming the lady will forgive our daring to make her the subject of a wager.”

Miss Brackenbury nodded assent, and the gentlemen proceeded in their knavery.

“ Well, I venture a guinea I guess her weight nearer than you do.”

“ Done !” cried Sir Henry : “ come, Tilly, what say you ? Will you join ?”

Mr. Dalrymple looked comically serious as he eyed the laughing damsel before he agreed. “ Yes, I will—done !” said he, boldly.

“ Agreed, agreed ; now, Miss Brackenbury, now, Madge.”

“ Stay, stay,” said Tilly, quietly, “ what do you guess ? Speak, Sir Henry, what is yours ?”

“ Oh ! I’ll guess :—let me consider,” then

looking at me mischievously, and, apparently, prolonging his gaze because he saw I disliked it, "I guess, from the weight of Miss Fane, who is not quite so tall as Miss Brackenbury—stay—I guess eight stone three pounds."

"Ah! you are out, Sir Henry," exclaimed Captain Heneage. "I'll have it eight stone one pound. Now, Tilly. You know it would not do to guess exactly," whispered he to Madge.

"I am the worst guesser in the world," Mr. Dalrymple began, with his usual modesty. "I am sure I hardly know what to say; I have no doubt you gentlemen are much better judges than I am, so I will not be far off;—I say eight stone two pounds."

"He has hit it, by Jove!" cried Captain Heneage.

"Hush, hush!" whispered Sir Henry, slyly.

“Nay, hang it, we will be honest. In with you, cousin Madge—eight stone two pounds exactly. Tilly, you are an excellent judge.”

“Oh dear me!” Tilly began, apologetically, “I am sure it was all accident—I declare I had not the least suspicion of a—trick,” added he, as if afraid to utter his aroused suspicion; “it was accident, indeed.”

“Indeed I believe you, my good fellow;” said Captain Heneage, “but we hardly deserve you to believe us. However, Howard, pay up, man, pay up, we have been sad cheats.”

“Aye, *you* may well say pay up,” returned Sir Henry, sullenly, and he paid each gentleman.

“Ha! ha! Howard, you are fairly done;—this is capital!” continued Captain Heneage, laughing heartily. “Here, Tilly, I am just where I started, with an even con-

science, and Howard pays for all. Never mind, man, 'the lesser wealth the lighter load,' I am told."

"*Who* told you so?" said Mr. Heneage; but the blushes of poor Madge, as he cast a merciless glance at her, told for themselves, that in some tender and serious discussion between the cousins, Madge had thrown off her usual gaiety, and, with the best feelings of a happy female, had soothed the younger brother by holding out, in the words of the elegant and pious man at the time popular with all classes—

"The lesser wealth the lighter load,
Small blame betides the poor."

To relieve the feelings of all, Lady Henry moved our return. We all thanked Mr. Pell, and parted at his door; we to return to Fort Anne, while Lady Henry and her ladies went home. Mr. Heneage crossed the bridge with

us; but, as Miss Elphinstone said she had promised to call upon a friend on the Parade, we there bade him good morning, and after our call Octavia entreated I would walk with her in the Grove. "That is, if you are not too fatigued, Joanna; you look pale, but a walk will do you good."

I consented, and we turned towards the Grove.

"Joanna, what shall I do? Teach me to check the devouring impatience which is making me so wretched this morning!"

"My dear girl, what can I say for you? Are you unhappy or disappointed that Mr. Heneage did not stay with us?"

"Oh! no, no, it was my own arranging entirely. I knew I was in no mood to be longer in his company, and I determined to call at Miss Lardner's purposely to part from him. Oh!

my heart feels bursting. Let us walk quicker—nothing can tire me—no distance, no weather. Ah! Joanna, if you were not here I should turn to the Head and climb the steepest height, seeking the breeze which would deter others. Now could I walk, walk, walk, till my strength and irritated feelings were alike worn out. Oh! why am I endued, plagued, with these miserable feelings? Forgive me—forgive my impatience; I am wretched, and must utter what I feel!”

“ My dear Octavia, I must blame you. I can see no rational cause for this burst of extreme irritability. Have you had a difference with Mr. Heneage? has any thing gone wrong? Tell me, my dear. Can I explain any thing away for you?”

“ No, no,” she murmured.

I paused:—then a new thought struck me

“ Octavia, you *must* deal openly with me. Is this change in your feelings occasioned by seeing Sir Henry Howard ?”

“ No ;—I protest seriously, no. Joanna, how can you suspect me ?”

I encouraged her indignation by still expressing doubt ; (though, in fact, I gave her earnest protestations the credit she desired ;) for I thought any revulsion of feeling was to be wished.

“ It is rather remarkable, however, Octavia, that this evil genius, as you sometimes call it, has slept till *his* appearance. Confess, my dear, that my suspicions have some slight grounds whereon to rest.”

“ Perhaps so,” said she, abruptly. For a few moments she was silent, as if quickly running through her recollections. I indulged her. At last she held up her speaking coun-

tenance, flushed with a tide of proud triumph, dashed with indignation.

“What did you suspect?” said she. “Is it possible you can suspect me of comparing the two men? Never, for a moment. If even I had done so before to-day, that wager would have exhibited the striking superiority of one over the other.”

“And yet Captain Heneage engaged in it.”

“True:—but I do not so much allude to the commencement of the wager as the temper displayed at the end. Did you not see the sullen frown?”

“But how does this compare with Mr. Heneage? Perhaps he might have shown his temper, if he had wagered and lost, as Sir Henry did.”

“Oh! how I detest your cool reasoning, Joanna,” cried she, impetuously; “but I

know," said she, changing to a smile, "in your heart you do not entertain the remotest comparison of the two. But I will tell you a slight circumstance which occurred this morning, and perhaps has made me view Sir Henry's ill-humour with less patience than I otherwise should have done. You remember Mr. Heenege and I walked to Jefferson's to change a book; I recollected you had said that you had never read Sydney Biddulph; and, as I wished to remark your feelings and opinions in reading it, I asked Jefferson for it, when he informed me it had been lost some time; owing to his carelessness in having made no entry of the person's name, he did not know where to inquire for it: he had merely an account of the date, which was September 2nd, three years ago, though the book was only allowed to be out seven days; and now it is September 22nd,

so it has run three years and three weeks," said Octavia, sighing absently.

Then rousing herself, she said, "Mr. Heneage asked Jefferson 'if there would not be a heavy fine?'"

" 'To be sure, Sir,—very heavy.'

" 'And, if the person brings it back, you mean to enforce it?'"

" 'Certainly, Sir; it is especially provoking just now, for two or three people are wanting that book. You, ma'am, have sent down several times; and Lady Henry was inquiring for it, in short I believe I must order another copy.'

" 'I wonder,' said Mr. Heneage, 'whether you really would charge that fine or not, if the book were to be produced.'

" 'Do not you think I ought, Sir?'"

" 'Indeed I do, and seriously advise you to

enforce it whenever the book appears. What would the sum be? I should think many times the value of the volume, by this time.'

" 'It would, Sir,' said Jefferson, smiling; 'but I should be content with the price of the book, if I could recover it.'

" 'And should you really charge the price of the book?' I asked.

" 'To be sure,' said Mr. Heneage, 'and I should consider him much to blame if he did not insist on the full fine. It is evident that the omission proceeds either from extreme carelessness, or a desire to defraud, and either way deserves punishing. Promise me, Mr. Jefferson, you will charge the full fine.'

" 'Oh! I will, Sir, I will——' began Mr. Jefferson; but the quick motion of Mr. Heneage's hand stopped his promise.

" 'Then there is the money,' cried he, 'I

have the book, and will send it to you to-night.'

" ' *You, Sir!* ' said the astonished librarian, ' and when did you take it ? ' "

" ' Oh ! I really forget, you must refer to your books ; come, remember your promise : you declared you would enforce the fine, and I desire you will. ' "

" ' But,' said Jefferson, (never touching the money,) ' I have not the least recollection of your ever taking a book from my library,—now, to tell you the truth, I had a confused remembrance that it was Sir Henry Howard who had it—are you sure you had it, Sir ? ' "

" Mr. Heneage smiled, and said, ' It was when I was last on the island, and it never crossed my mind till to-day. ' "

" ' It is very strange,' said the straight-forward librarian, ' you could not have taken it

with you ; for it is one of the Novelist's Magazine, and so large you must have observed it, and if you left it at Lord Henry Murray's, I wonder it was not returned.'

" Mr. Heneage laughed outright at his curiosity, but refused to gratify it, and left the money on the counter, for it was positively refused by Mr. Jefferson. Now how different was this from Sir Henry's meanness about the wager : do you *now* think the two men ought to be compared ? "

I smiled at her heat, and said, " Very well, my dear, then make yourself happy and content. You have the man you like, do not fret yourself into a fever because there happen to be men in the world whom you do not like."

" I am not fretting about him," said she, peevishly, " indeed I am not fretting at all ; I feel so much relieved. Oh ! Joanna, what a

blessing you are to me ; now, this morning, if I had been alone, I should have worked myself up almost to illness——”

She suddenly stopped short, for we had emerged from the Grove, and were now crossing Major Taubman's grounds. She pointed to the stream that runs trifling to one's very feet in passing the Nunnery.

“ It is very strange,” said she, “ that I never am in these wretched moods, but water meets my eye—never——” and she paused,—“ Conis-terre,—that night on the Head ; here—always—always water ; I believe I am born to be drowned.”

“ What folly, Octavia ! this borders on madness ; you *bend* circumstances to your whims, they do not meet them ; did you not choose this walk ? did you not entreat me to come ? and now you flatter yourself that *events* brought

you to this stream, which, after all, is not deep enough to drown a dog."

I found ridicule an admirable assistant in hushing her indulgence of romance. She smiled but it seemed as if she smiled because she did not know what else to do ; for her eye was fixed on the road to Kirk Braddon—mine followed hers.

" See, Joanna, there is Mr. Heneage ; 'tis he, indeed—it is—it is."

" Well, my dear, and if so ? but it may not be. I feel persuaded that Mr. Heneage is taller—stay—when he has passed those trees we shall see better."

" Oh ! no need," cried she, in rapture, "*I have mistaken others for him, but never him for another.*"

I could not help sighing to witness this indulgence of feeling, which, though so charming in its sunny moods, I knew to be so terrible a

gift. It was, in fact, Mr. Heneage, who had walked forward, after leaving us at Mr. Lardner's door.

With all Octavia's faults, I never for a moment suspected her of knowing he was gone that way, when she so earnestly wished to go thither. Her faults were many, but, unfortunately, she was not sufficiently ashamed of them to try to hide them. A little more reserve would often have spared her friends' feelings, at least, and perhaps her own.

Miss Elphinstone ran forward to join her lover, who seemed little less pleased to meet her ; he certainly was less so, but I remembered that there was always more affection on one side than the other, and in this particular case I believed the lady's preponderated : at any rate, each loved according to their humours, and hers showed more than his.

“ I am very glad I came back this way instead of by the Peel road,” said Mr. Heneage. “ After I left you, I thought I could go to Kirk Braddon and finish a sketch of the church I began last week, and I once intended to return the way I went.”

“ And what made you take this road ?” asked Octavia.

“ Oh ! to have another view of Fort Anne, to be sure,” said he, laughing ; “ you know I should not have seen it on the Peel road.”

“ Nonsense,” said she, smiling because he smiled, though never pleased by jesting compliments ; “ but tell me, which was your first intention ? I affirm that the first intention is, most times, the happier.”

“ Ah ! my little metaphysician, this is against the common rule of life—you know, or you ought to know, second thoughts are best.”

“No, no,” said Octavia, “first thoughts are *natural*, therefore best; second thoughts occur on consideration, and are trammelled by other circumstances which are then thought to outweigh the immediate fact,—be assured we ought to follow the dictates of nature.”

“I thought we were taught to check nature,” said Mr. Heneage, gaily.

“What, do not you like nature?” asked Miss Elphinstone, “you who pleaded so successfully the superiority of nature over art, the other day.”

“You catch at my opinions and tack them in such various ways,” said Mr. Heneage, “that sometimes I am at a loss to know them again; the subjects were so widely different, if indeed, we can properly say they deserve the name of subject;—but where have we got to? or, rather,” said he, evidently wishing to turn

the conversation, "where did we come from? Oh! you wanted to know why I came this way?—well, your curiosity is natural, therefore I will indulge it;—I am going to call on Sir Henry Howard."

There was a blank pause after this,—I believe we both felt he had raised, rather than satisfied our curiosity, but Octavia was too proud to inquire further.

He looked down mischievously at us for a moment, and then said, smiling, "What, not satisfied yet? must I tell you why I am going to his house? You remember, Octavia, what occurred at Jefferson's this morning, and that I acknowledged the fine, as, in fact, I consider I ought to do, to Jefferson; but the book was not taken out by me, nor did I, on the night I first saw it, know it belonged to a library. Must I tell you all about it? Ah! wo-

man's curiosity must be indulged, because it is *natural*, but remember, Miss Fane, I only encourage *good-nature*. Miss Elphinstone knows of a fine one on a mis-laid book from Jefferson's library, which I acknowledged this morning ; as I told you this moment, I knew not that it was his, when I first saw the said book ; but it so happened, that this morning it was sent to me by Sir Henry, with a note, informing me it had lain at his house since my last visit to Douglas, and he took the earliest opportunity of returning it to me."

"And why are you going to call?" asked Miss Elphinstone, eagerly.

"To inform *him* I have paid the money, and request it to be repaid me," said Mr. Heneage, quietly.

Miss Elphinstone changed colour, but had not time to answer, for as fate would have it,

we at that moment emerged from the Nunnery grounds and entering the Grove, found ourselves within four yards of Sir Henry and his sister, who said they were going to call on Major Taubman.

“I did not expect to meet you here, Miss Fane,” said Sir Henry, fixing his eyes pointedly on me; “I thought you were calling at the Lardners’.”

“This seems a calling day,” said Mr. He-
neage, “I was intending to see you this morning, but having met you I will write my reply to your note.”

“You honour me, sir;” and we passed on.

“Did I not tell you something would happen?” cried Octavia to me, the moment we were out of hearing, “Oh! I felt assured of it.”

“Well, and what has happened?” said I

with a voice and manner intended to be much more tranquil than I really felt.

She looked reproachfully at Mr. Heneage as she said, "They will quarrel—I am certain—I see—it is evident—Sir Henry's biting manner to you, Joanna, once or twice this morning, and Mr. Heneage's determined words: oh! Brooke, pray give it up."

"Give what up?" asked he, perfectly astonished at her earnestness, "my dear girl, when will you learn to let things glide in their own stream? Trust me, Sir Henry and I have no intention, nay, no *room* to quarrel—why should we? I shall write him a request to pay the fine, and when I have explained that I knew nothing of the circumstances, he will do so, and there is an end of the matter. Make yourself easy, and always remember, that it is our mutual duty to render the present hour happy,

then you know the future must be so. You see," said he, smiling, "I already venture to give advice, and I assure you it is what I will try and help you to like. Now, Miss Fane, tell me what you are drawing. I have been all the way to Kirk Braddon to finish sketching that corner of the churchyard with the three old elms, for my mother—a dear friend of hers lies there;—look, do you know the corner?"

"*Ah! les trois ormes!*" cried Miss Elphinstone, "it is near there I wish to lie—I wonder if I shall rest in Kirk Braddon churchyard?"

"I should rather think not," replied Mr. Heneage; "and even if you do, these three elms will most likely have ceased to shade the corner you have chosen;—but see we are at the bridge. Now, fair ladies, must I not say good morning? can you be so unreasonable as to require me to climb up the Head on purpose to walk back alone?"

But Miss Elphinstone did not relinquish his arm.

“What, *must* I?” he took out his watch—“I really fear it is Lord Henry’s dinner-time, and I must write this note before we go to the Lardners—I shall meet you this evening.”

Still Octavia lingered, and he humoured her.

“Well then, you must give me some dinner?”

“Oh! yes, yes!”

And he went with us, and steep as is the Head, Octavia seemed to gather, rather than lose strength, as she bounded forward with a higher colour and brighter eye.

“Oh! how I enjoy this wind,” she cried, as her hat blew almost off; “I like walking in the wind extremely, but it is very unkind, for it generally gives me a head-ache.”

“I wonder you still like it then,” said Mr. Heneage, gazing at her with her hair tossed across her eyes in most admired disorder.

“Oh ! do you not know there is something agreeable in liking what gives one trouble ? we have nothing to combat in a mild sunny day ; but such breezes as these,” she continued, as the wind pressed the flap of her hat downwards, “must be conquered and respected.” And on they hastened, and reached Fort Anne some moments before me, at whom they laughed merrily on my arrival. Now, to confess the truth, there is no one thing I dislike more than feeling that any number of persons, from one to twenty, are watching my arrival at any place ; I know that on such occasions I walk more awkwardly, make more false steps, and feel my arms more *de trop* than can be imagined by those who never remember being so circumstanced ; and on this morning I was altogether unhinged ; I felt that they were uncommonly happy : there they stood, blessing

and being blessed in their mutual happiness, whilst *I* did not feel quite happy ; and when to this was added my nervousness on being *watched* up the hill, I protest, that I never felt so thankful as when I fairly reached the conservatory door, and rejoined them.

CHAPTER XVI.

CONCEALMENT.

“Nay, these wild fits of uncurbed laughter
Athwart the gloomy tenor of your mind,
As it has lower'd of late, so keenly cast,
Unsuited seem, and strange.”

JOANNA BAILLIE.

DURING dinner, Miss Elphinstone was in higher spirits than usual ; she laughed, talked, and jested incessantly, and teased me because I was serious. At length, however, she tired, and before the cloth was drawn acknowledged she had exhausted herself. “I believe it is the

wind," said she, "you know I told you it always gives me the head-ache; but I will write to Henriana Murray, about the plants I promised to nurse for her this winter; perhaps I shall be better if we leave this warm room."

We adjourned to the Octagon, and as Miss Elphinstone sat down to her desk she threw some paper towards Mr. Heneage, who had quickly followed us, and advised him to send his note to Sir Henry at the same time, "that is," and she laid her hand on it again, "if you *will* write, but pray humour me in this one instance."

He shook his head and took up a pen; accidentally his eye met mine, as I stood leaning against the chimney-piece.

"Why are you so unusually grave, Miss Fane?"

I too shook my head, but afraid of alarming Miss Elphinstone, and ashamed of being alarmed

myself, I did not answer. To my surprise he pushed the paper aside, and said, “Do *you* advise my not writing this same note, Miss Fane?”

I could not help it—instinctively I glanced at Miss Elphinstone, whose heightened colour showed the jealousy I feared to excite, even in a matter of judgment; afraid of increasing it, I answered hurriedly, “Oh! no, I am sure you will only do what is right.” And he wrote and sealed it.

Miss Elphinstone took it with hers for Miss Murray, and said she would leave them with the servant when she went to dress; she did so, and soon followed me up stairs. Just as she reached my chamber a ring at the door-bell caused her to go to the head of the stairs,—I happened to want her opinion on some part of my dress, and called her by name.

“Hush, hush!” said she impatiently, and ran

down stairs. On her return she told me it was Mr. Heneage's servant bringing his master's dress for the evening.

"Well, and why did you go down, Octavia? I was asking your opinion about this band."

"Oh!" said she rapidly, "Mr. Heneage thought his servant might as well take the notes, but William had just gone with them."

"Then they would meet on the Head," said I.

"No, I believe not;—I think William said he should row across, as I wanted him to return quickly.

"And now tell me, Octavia, will this band do?"

"Ah! I had forgotten—yes, my dear, it matches very well; but do you know, Joanna, I should like extremely to get off' going to the Lardners this evening—I am not at all well, and quite fatigued."

“ My dear Octavia ! ” and I looked up in surprise, and saw her sitting idly by the fire-side. “ How do you mean ? are you really ill ? I thought at dinner I had never seen you look better, or in better spirits.”

“ Was I ? but Mrs. Hayward has not sent my dress home ; I cannot go.”

“ Your dress ! you must excuse me, Octavia, repeating your words, but did you not tell her, this morning, it need not be finished ? I thought we both agreed to wear our crapes this evening.”

She was silent.

“ Are you really not well ? ” I again asked, as I saw her evidently wishing to express something she did not.

“ Oh ! yes, I am ill indeed and in truth—I cannot go ; my head throbs terribly. Do, dear Joanna, go to papa, and tell him I am not well enough to go out this evening.”

To this I readily consented ; but on attempting to divest myself of some of my frippery, she exclaimed, “ Why so ? *you* will go. Oh ! Joanna, you must—you know this party is made for you and Miss Brackenbury.”

“ That may be ; but it is quite impossible I can go without you—how could I ? I have never been to Mrs. Lardner’s and know very little of her—I will stay at home with you.”

“ Not for the world ! I could not think of it ; no, no, go to papa, and tell him.”

“ Indeed, Octavia, I cannot go without you.”

Starting up, she hurried down stairs, and wishing to hear her account, I followed.

Major Elphinstone and Mr. Heneage were still dressing, and we had to wait some time, during which Miss Elphinstone seemed much discomposed.

“ You are tired, Octavia,” said I, “ and I should advise you to go to bed, as soon as Major Elphinstone is gone ; we had a long walk to-day.”

“ Yes, yes,” said she, evidently never hearing a word I had said, and soothing her irritated feelings by tearing a piece of paper she had taken up.

The gentlemen entered.

“ What ! dressed first ? ” said the Major. “ Eh ! Mr. Heneage, I thought ladies were always allowed an extra half-hour ; but how is this ? you are not dressed, Octavia ! ”

“ Oh ! papa, I cannot go, indeed—my head is much worse,” she continued, turning to Mr. Heneage, who looked his surprise ; “ it ached all dinner time, you remember I told you, and now,” putting her hand before her eyes, “ it is worse than ever.”

Major Elphinstone looked towards me.

“ Oh ! Joanna will go with you, papa.”

“ No, indeed I cannot—I cannot possibly—I do not know them ; let me stay with you.”

Mr. Heneage, too, concurred in wishing me not to leave Miss Elphinstone ; partly, I believe, because he saw I was very unwilling to go without her, but more from anxiety for her.

“ You will be so dull alone,” said he, “ let her stay and keep you company.”

“ But no, no,” she cried, “ I cannot think of it, knowing the party was chiefly made for her.”

“ You say right, chiefly,” said Major Elphinstone, “ for I understood you to say yesterday it was likewise in compliment to Lady Henry’s guests.”

“ My dear father,” said Octavia, as if quite wearied, “ I *will* go—I see you wish it.”

But now Mr. Heneage interfered, and offered cheerfully to stay and take care of us both. Thus we remained alternately offering and refusing, till Major Elphinstone declared it was getting so late, something must be determined.

“ Octavia, my dear, could you go, to be comfortable ?”

“ Indeed no, father,” and her quickly changing colour bore testimony to her words.

“ You seemed so lively at dinner,” remarked her father, regarding her more in surprise than doubt.

“ I will go, I will,” interrupted Octavia, shrinking from his examination.

“ I am sure Miss Elphinstone is right in declining to go,” said Mr. Heneage ; “ what can

be so miserable as a room full of light and voices, with a head-ache," and he kindly moved the light from before Octavia's eyes; she sank on her chair, and said earnestly to me, "Pray go, Joanna, you see papa does not like going without one of us."

I hesitated still, for I had felt not quite well all the day, and some way my tranquillity was not increased by this freak of Miss Elphinstone's; perhaps if I had been quite well, I might not have had a suspicion of its being a caprice.

"There will be Lady Henry, my dear, and Mrs. Heneage," said Major Elphinstone, observing me still waver, "and we will take every care of you—will we not, Mr. Heneage?"

But Mr. Heneage was busy with a sort of by-conversation with Octavia, and as the Major finished speaking, I heard him say to her, "No,

upon my word, I never doubted it—I saw in an instant, by your heavy eyes, that you had headache; besides, I always believe *one* excuse; perhaps,” continued he, smiling, “if you had made two or three, I should have doubted them all.”

“If, for instance,” interrupted the Major, good-humouredly, “you had said your dress was not to your mind, or something of that sort.”

Poor Octavia’s face crimsoned so, that even Mr. Heneage observed it, and but for my rising immediately, to prepare for going, might have remarked it. When I returned to the Octagon room, I found Miss Elphinstone alone, and in a state of great nervousness. She held out her hand to me, as she bade me good night, and when I remarked on her being so feverish, “Yes,” said she, “I am very feverish, do you not think I am better at home?”

“Heaven knows, Octavia,” said I, scarcely aware of my words, for I saw, by her avoiding my eyes that something was wrong.

We had a very pleasant party, and staid late. After the first entrance I forgot that I had come alone, and, once seated near Miss Brackenbury, felt quite at ease, if not in spirits.

Sir Henry Howard came in late. Mrs. Lardner observed on his fashionable hours; adding, that she had wanted him to assist in managing the loo table.

There are many people who have two distinctly different voices, and Sir Henry was one of these:—the one he made use of in holding conversation with any single individual was soft, lisping, and insinuating, but his public voice was round, sounding, and inquiring. I mean it seemed to inquire for

listeners. And as on this occasion he stood in the centre of the room playing with his coffee-spoon with great *nonchalance*, he spoke in his public voice, which, though amid many prating tongues, was heard separately and distinctly, like a drum among fifes and violins.

“ Madam, you honour me:—I am proud to find I have been wanted; but to own the truth, the evening was so fine, I was tempted to a stroll upon the Head, instead of knocking at your door precisely at the critical tea-taking hour.”

Mrs. Lardner smiled and passed on—she, good, easy woman, seeing and hearing no further than the bare words which Sir Henry uttered; but I, who knew the night was very foggy and untempting to stroll, could not help glancing from Sir Henry to Mr. Heneage. The former had turned towards the chimney-piece and one

of the young Lardners ; and was listening with apparent interest to a history of that day's shooting ; to which he replied in the round voice which sounded gratingly on my ear.

On turning to Mr. Heneage I could not remark any change in his countenance. His eyes, if they had ever strayed towards Sir Henry, were now intent upon some charades which Madge was showing him : and except a very slight elevation of the eyebrow, (the only sign of listening which escaped him,) I could not detect the least symptom of that jealousy which was devouring me. I believe I looked so fixedly and long at him that he was obliged to meet my eye, but it was so openly, so smilingly, that I felt, *if* his look replied to my suspicion at all, it was by a glance of increased reliance on Octavia : and once I thought, “ And why should I be the only one to doubt her ? Captain

Heneage, Madge, every one tells me that the time we stood in Mr. Pell's warehouse was enough to give any one a headache ;—then the wind ”

But suspicion would not be banished ; I knew she scarcely ever complained of headache, and I also knew she had framed two excuses, so I sat still blaming her, and myself, and Sir Henry ; for I could not divest myself of the idea that he was connected with her refusing to accompany us. Sometimes I flattered myself she merely disliked meeting him ; but why need I have been troubled by that ? besides it was what must happen again and again : and thus I continued through the evening, alternately blaming myself for my suspicions, Octavia for exciting them, and admiring Mr. Heneage for being superior to them.

CHAPTER XVII.

QUESTION AND ANSWER.

“ Oh! gentle friend,
Chide not her mirth who yesterday was sad,
And may be so to-morrow.”

WHEN we reached Fort Anne, a little after midnight, I found Octavia had gone to bed, which I was glad to hear. She and I slept in the same room, and I was careful not to make any noise to disturb her.

As I sat curling my hair by the fire, I could

not help calling to mind the scene which she always styled the "Breakfast morning" at school. Unconsciously I stopped curling my hair; and memory taking entire possession of me, led me gently back till I read, as in a book, all the incidents of that period of our lives. How engrossing such a perusal is, I doubt not all my readers know. How impatiently I stooped to *recover* the brush which, falling from my knee, interrupted the survey I was taking of Elphine as she appeared stealing back to her bed the morning of her clandestine visit at Mrs. Leigh's! I returned to the subject, and strove to take it up where I had been interrupted; but the noise had roused Miss Elphinstone, who spoke, and on the very subject which occupied me.

"I have been watching you a long time, Joanna, you remind me of that morning when

I came home, and you lay watching *me*;—do you remember?”

I told her that was the very event which occupied my thoughts.

“How remarkable! how very remarkable! and the coincidence too is very extraordinary; but I have often observed such coincidences in my life. I like to enter into them—to dwell upon them. Do not you remember my telling you of the coincidences and associations attending my wandering near water, and many other similar feelings of superstition which I love to treasure up, and dote on?”

“Ridiculous Octavia! — ‘to dote on,’ indeed!” cried I, now fully awakened myself, and seeing my own folly reflected in the caricature she had indulged in. “Pray do not indulge in any more romantic nonsense, but tell me how is your head?”

“ Better, thank you, much better ; but really now, Joanna, you must excuse my laughing at your impatient inquiry, for I could have been certain at the moment I spoke, that *you* were wandering and rioting in as fanciful thoughts as ever *I* entertain.”

“ Certainly as unreal, because past ; but not superstitious,” said I : “ but now tell me what you did with yourself when we left you—how long have you been asleep ?”

She started up, and throwing on a dressing gown, joined me at the fire-side.

“ Never asleep, Joanna,—how could I sleep ?” and she laughed.

“ Why not ?” asked I.

“ Oh ! because I was jealous and thinking of what you were doing all the time, to be sure.”

I answered her coldly, for I perceived she had spoken evasively, and I felt another twinge of

suspicion of her proceedings. As is very natural, where there is a pre-disposition on one side to suspect, and on the other to conceal, we at first fell on indifferent subjects—then conversation languished, and finally died away into something like sullen silence. Have you never experienced the disagreeable circumstance of a similar uncomfortable silence, a growing taciturnity? Though we know and feel at the time, that it will each moment be more difficult to break through, we still indulge a weak pride, which, even while we are thus feeling it, upbraids and punishes us? In this dilemma, Miss Elphinstone and I soon found ourselves, and it was scarcely possible for it to have occurred at a more awkward time. I knew perfectly well, that the time *must* soon come when I should have finished; till then I had the advantage of employment over her, but

as my occupation gradually decreased, I began to think she had the more comfortable post of the two, for ensconced in an easy chair, with eyes closed and head reposing, she might be supposed to sleep, but when I ceased to curl my hair, my change of operations would be apparent, and I dreaded the approach of it. A thousand times in a minute I blamed myself for this obstinacy which grew with that it fed on, yet continued, spite of my self-blame. I once heard a merry wife confess, that she had occasion to bless the accident which spoilt a costly breakfast service;—herself and husband were rapidly advancing to a similar unpleasant issue, both anxious that the silence should be broken, yet neither of them able to conquer their temper, when, most fortunately, a favourite cat caused the downfall, which, in destroying the china, gave a reason

for a renewal of conversation and a subject to scold upon: my friend candidly acknowledged that the accident was of most fortunate consequences, for it gave each an excuse for venting their gathered ill-humour upon the animal at the moment, and she promised and vowed to herself that she would take good care never to bring herself into such another dilemma.

Here, however, was no such prospect for me and Octavia; we had no living animal in the room to make a stir; no one was likely to come in to interrupt us—we had not even the comfort of employment to enable us, as is general in similar cases, to perform a good day's work in an hour. How I longed that she would ask me about the party I had been at, and how she longed that I would enquire about her evening at home, I leave those to judge who have themselves been in the like dilemma, and remember the difficulty

of extricating themselves. Unpleasant as in thoughts and cogitations were, they did me good, for they made me more charitable to her; I reflected, that if *I* could so easily be conquered by my temper, I ought to be doubly indulgent to hers, and so in the end myself fought against myself, and my better nature was victorious.

“ Well, Octavia, here we sit musing, instead of going to bed —come my dear.”

“ Oh ! do not go, Joanna, I want to talk to you.”

I waited in silence, thinking what a pity it was she had wasted so much time.

“ I have had a most miserable evening,” said she.

“ I thought you would have,” was on my lips, but I recollected my previous bad temper, and refrained.

“ How so, Octavia ?”

“ I scarcely dare tell you—but yet I will—I cannot rest without it ; but pray do not blame me much—I was miserable till I did it, and I am miserable now.”

This alarmed me, for in that moment I remembered Sir Henry’s saying he had been on the Head that evening, and my previous fears that he had been at Fort Anne, seemed to be confirmed.

“ I have kept back Mr. Heneage’s letter to Sir Henry.”

“ Good heavens, Octavia !”

“ Nay, worse,” she continued, “ I wrote to him myself, begging he would come here this evening before he went to Mrs. Lardner’s, and he came, and now you know the worst.”

“ Do *you* know the worst ?” I exclaimed, thoroughly shocked at her interference ; “ how will Mr. Heneage bear it ? Oh ! Octavia, I

could not have believed you would venture on so dangerous an experiment !”

“It was no experiment,” said she; “I did it purely to prevent mischief.”

“You have made mischief, say rather,—and so indelicate too, to send for Sir Henry, and particularly as you are situated—what good could you expect to come of such a mad action?”

She was silent, but listened apparently astonished at my impetuosity.

“I cannot imagine how Mr. Heneage will endure the thought of your having stooped in this way to Sir Henry,—it is putting yourself into his power, which *I* could not breathe and bear—such triumph for him; compromise for Mr. Heneage! vexation for every one who knows you !” and being completely mortified, I wept heartily.

“You never seem to think of the circumstances which caused me to act so,” said she; “you forget how miserable I was this morning; how miserable *you* were—for you *were* anxious, I am certain, I saw it by your looks and nervousness as we walked home, and during dinner.”

“At least I conquered my nervousness, if I felt any, Octavia, and in my simple opinion, you would have done much more good by going quietly with us to Mrs. Lardner’s and *inducing* an establishment of pacific feelings between the gentlemen, than by meddling between them,—especially in a clandestine manner.”

“Not clandestinely—no, on my word, I mean to tell Mr. Hencage the first moment I see him.”

“Well, well, I hope he will bear it better than I expect; I will try to hope against my

fears. No doubt you know your power—you know how far he, like all of his sex, will bear a woman's prerogative to stretch."

She was silent, but her lip quivered. "You are cruel, Joanna, very cruel!" and then, after another silence, the large tears which had gathered and lain some time in her eyes, rolled silently and painfully down her face.

I can bear to see a woman weep heartily, and passionately, because I know that it is a relief to her, but tears from the heart, like hers, long suppressed, speak the anguish which the heart has borne before they were suffered to flow. All the reasoning in the world would not have brought Octavia to her tears; "Reason, opposed to passion," says Dr. Spurzheim, "seldom succeeds, but passion opposed to passion, conquers:" and so it was with her. My distress, my anxiety, had lit-

tle effect on her, but her disappointment (at what positively, at the moment, did not occur to me) produced a change.

She was vexed and disappointed that I did not ask her what passed with Sir Henry Howard ; but, the truth was, I felt too much occupied with thinking of the consequences of his visit, to give thought to the circumstance itself. However, as I felt some compunction for the temper I had the hour previous been betrayed to indulge, I did all in my power, without compromising my consistency, to sooth her present distress. A miserable night we passed, and so ill did Miss Elphinstone seem when she appeared at the breakfast table next morning, that nothing could content the Major but procuring medical advice.

Poor Octavia remonstrated, but in vain,

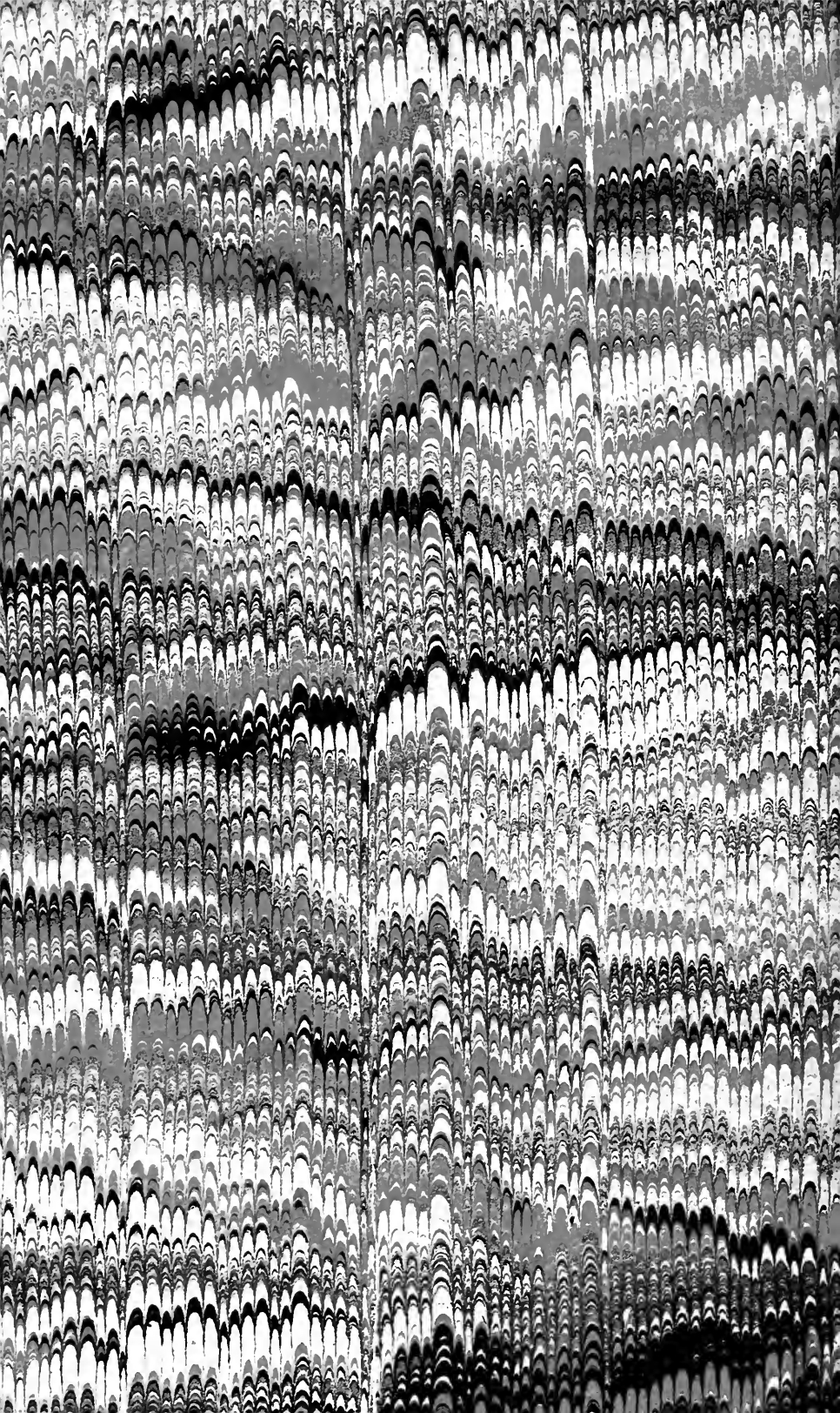
and this was the first, and slightest penalty she paid for her temerity. Immediately after a hurried breakfast, Major Elphinstone walked to Douglas for Mr. Manby.

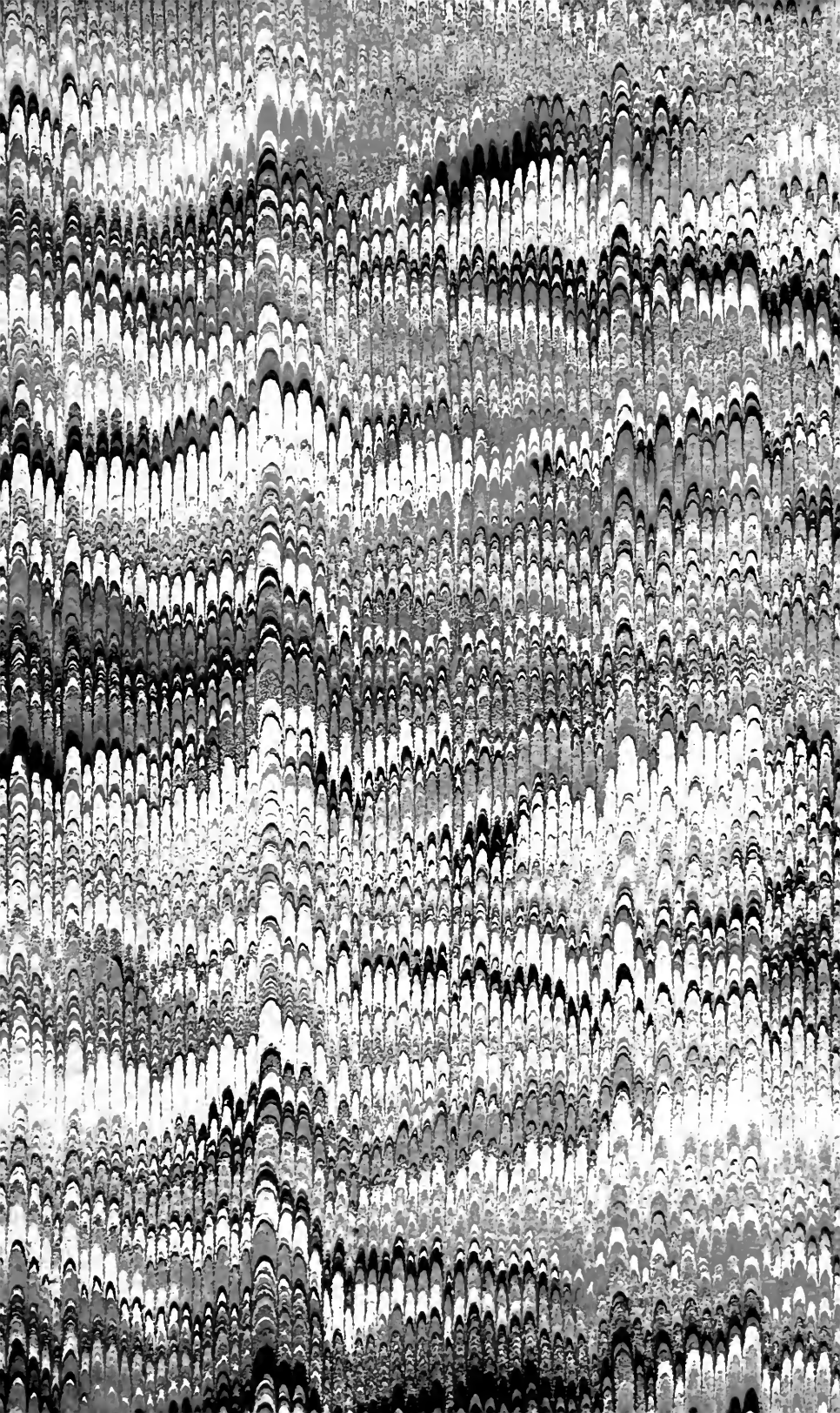
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